# More Than Just Pretty Girls in Uniform: A Historical Study of Women's Military Roles during World War II, 1939-1945

by
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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University*


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March 2021

# Declaration

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# Abstract:

The Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps (WADC) was created in 1940 and consisted of the Women's Auxiliary Army Service (WAAS), Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and Women's Auxiliary Naval Service (WANS). The members of the WADC served as auxiliaries to the South African Army, Air Force and Naval Service. Despite more than 21 000 white women enlisting in the WADC, the roles played by South African women during World War II, has been largely overlooked in the historiography. In contrast, there is a growing international scholarship surrounding the participation of women in World War II. These works focus on, amongst other things, the complex and interrelated factors that limited women's military service as merely "auxiliary".

This thesis aims to investigate the roles played by white South African women in the WAAS, WAAF and WANS within the broader military structure of the Union Defence Force (UDF). It also aims to show how these roles changed over the course of World War II. It asks a very simple question: How auxiliary were these servicewomen? Archival documentation and testimony from servicewomen relating to the founding, organisational structures, training and deployment of the three branches of the WADC are therefore analysed. This is positioned within the local and international historiography on women's auxiliaries in Britain, the United States, Russia and other allied nations to compare and contrast the experiences of woman auxiliaries in different national and military contexts. Furthermore, this case study is situated in the historiographical debates on military culture, military masculinity and civilian femininity, the war taboo and the double helix of gender.

This dissertation demonstrates that participation in the UDF was confined by the complex intersection of race, class and gender, and the upholding of prevailing socio-political hierarchies. The UDF essentially functioned as a microcosm of South African society and this restricted the level to which these women could break beyond the proverbial "brass ceiling". This is not to suggest that their actual roles were strictly confined by these parameters as the manpower pressures of the war necessitated a degree of flexibility, allowing women to take on what was deemed a male role. Nor does it mean that they perceived their own service on these terms.

The dissertation argues that the role of the auxiliary changed over the course of the war not necessarily because of a change in organisational structure, but rather as a result of the unpreparedness of the UDF at the onset of WWII. This provided an opportunity for the male

divisions of the army, airforce and navy to have a level of influence on the trajectory of the corresponding women's auxiliary services placed under their administration. This provided an opportunity for women in each of these arms to move beyond the level of pure auxiliary, culminating with one division of the WANS becoming active combatants. Thus, the evolution occurs across, as well as within, those divisions. The boundary between auxiliary and combatant is, therefore, more porous than the terms suggest. From this, the dissertation identifies six steps in an auxiliary/combatant spectrum and argues that it is not simply the war taboo of the UDF which had to be overcome by these women but, in addition, the way in which the historiography continues to relegate their contributions into the realm of the auxiliary, becomes the contemporary battle which must be challenged and reimagined.

# Opsomming:

Die Vrouehulpverdedigingskorpse (VHVK) is in 1940 gestig en het bestaan uit die Vrouehulpleërdiens (VHLD), Vrouehulplugmag (VHLM) en Vrouehulpvlootdiens (VHVD). Die lede van die VHVK het as hulptroepe vir die Suid-Afrikaanse Leër, Lugmag en Vlootdiens gedien. Ten spyte daarvan dat meer as 21 000 wit vroue in die VHVK gewerf was, is die rolle vervul deur Suid-Afrikaanse vroue tydens die Tweede Wêreldoorlog, grootliks in die geskiedskrywing oor die hoof gesien. In teenstelling is daar ‘n groeiende internasionale navorsingsbelangstelling oor die deelname van vroue in die Tweede Wêreldoorlog. Hierdie studies fokus, onder andere, op die komplekse en verwante faktore wat vroue in militêre diens net as “hulp” beperk het.

Dié proefskrif het ten doel om die rolle wat wit Suid-Afrikaanse vroue gespeel het in die VHLD, VHLM, VHVD, binne die breër militêre strukture van die Unieverdedigingsmag (UVM), te ondersoek. Dit is ook daarop gemik om vas te stel hoe hierdie rolle gedurende die Tweede Wêreldoorlog verander het. Die vraag is: Hoe aanvullend was hierdie vroulike dienstroepe? Argiefdokumentasie met betrekking tot die stigting, organisasiestrukture, opleiding en ontplooiing van die drie takke van die VHVK, is dus ontleed. Dit is binne die plaaslike en internasionale geskiedskrywing oor vrouehulpdienste in Brittanje, die Verenigde State, Rusland en ander geallieerde nasies geplaas om die ervarings van vroulike hulptroepe in verskillende nasionale en militêre kontekste te vergelyk en te kontrasteer. Verder is hierdie gevallestudie binne die geskiedkundige debate oor militêre kultuur, militêre manlikheid en burgerlike vroulikheid, die oorlogstaboe geleë en die dubbele heliks van gender.

Hierdie proefskrif toon dus dat deelname aan die UVM deur die komplekse kruispunt van ras, klas en geslag, en die bewaring van heersende sosio-politiese hiërarchië, begrens is. Die UVM het wesentlik as ‘n mikrokosmos van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing gefunksioneer en dit het die vlak waarnatoe hierdie vroue die spreekwoordelike “glas plafon” van militêre range deur kon breek, beperk. Dit is nie te sê dat hulle werklike rolle deur hierdie grense streng beperk was nie, want die mannekragdruk van die oorlog het `n graad van aanpasbaarheid noodsaaklik gemaak en vroue dit het toegelaat om rolle wat gesien was as manlike aan te pak. Nog dat dié vroue hulle diens in dieselfde hoedanigheid ervaar het nie,

Dié proefskrif redeneer dat die rol van die hulpmagte in die loop van die oorlog verander het, nie weens ‘n verandering in organisasiestrukture nie, maar eerder as gevolg van die ongereedheid van die UVM aan die begin van die Tweede Wêreldoorlog. Dit het vir die

manlike afdelings van die leër, lugmag en vloot die geleendtheid gegee om ‘n vlak van invloed op die koeëlbaan van die gelykstaande vrouehulpdienste wat onder hulle administrasie geplaas is, uit te oefen. Dít het ‘n geleentheid vir die vroue van die drie vertakkings geskep om verby die vlak van net hulp te beweeg. Hierdie beweging het ‘n hoogtepunt bereik toe een van die seksies van die VHVD strydend geword het. Dus het die evolusie regoor, sowel as binne, dié seksies plaasgevind. Die grens tussen hulptroepe en vegtroepe is dus meer poreus as wat dié terme voorstel. Gebasseer op hierdie waarneming, wys hierdie proefskrif ses stappe uit in `n hulp/veg spectrum en bewys dat dit nie alleenlik die oorlogstaboe van die UVM is wat deur hierdie vroue oorkom moes word nie, maar ook die manier hoe geskiedskrywing aanhou om hulle bydrae in die terrein van aanvullende werkers af te skaal en derhalwe word dit ‘n voordurende geveg wat uitgedaag en hervoorgestel word moet.

# Acknowledgements:

Throughout the writing of this thesis, I have received a wealth of support and assistance from many different people. Without them, I would not have been able to complete this project.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Chet Fransch. His continuous support, encouragement and detailed feedback steered me through this project. Whithout his insight and guidance, I would have been lost. I would also like to thank Prof. Bill Nasson, who guided me through my Masters and Honours research, for valuable insight during the early phase of this research.

The feedback, comments and questions from my comrades in HFM and Prof Sandra Swart were invaluable in helping me develop my depth of understanding. The same is true for my fellow members of Chet's still unnamed research group. And, Anri Delport, Jacques de Vries and Garrett Eriksen; those other lost souls wading through the complexities of social military history - Thank you all!

Many thanks to my parents – Esther and Kobie Kotzé – for their never-ending love and support and generous financial support. *Dankie Mamma en Pappa*. I must also acknowledge my mothers-in-law, Eldurette Barnard and Karin van der Westhuizen for their never-ending moral support.

I also thank my wonderful husband, Mikhail Kunneke, from the bottom of my heart for his support and encouragement. He has been a shoulder to cry on, a maker of tea and someone to bounce ideas off, without too much complaint.

My friends: Lizelle Smit, Sarel van der Westhuizen, Maynard Meiring, Marsha Peacock, P.C. Kemp and so many others. They have all, in very different ways, provided encouragement, sympathy and welcome distractions.

Finally, and perhaps unconventially, I would also like to acknowledge my two cats. Despite their best efforts at distraction, I have finished.

# Dedication:

*Vir Danie. Dankie vir die boek.*

That's the trouble about the good guys and the bad guys! They're all guys!

Terry Pratchett, *Monstrous Regiment* (New York, Doubleday. 2003)

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# List of Abbreviations:

| | |
|---|---|
| AA | Anti-Aircraft |
| ACF | Active Citizen Force |
| AES | Army Education Scheme |
| AS-WAAS | Artillery Specialists-WAAS |
| A/SFD | Anti-Submarine Fixed Defence |
| ATA | Air Transport Auxiliary |
| ATS | Auxiliary Territorial Service |
| CM | Controlled Mining |
| CO | Commanding Officer |
| FANY | First Aid Nursing Yeomanry |
| HDA | Harbour Defence Asdic |
| HDO | Harbour Defence Operator |
| HMSAS | His Majesty's South African Ship |
| HSD | Higher Submarine Detector |
| MP | Military Police |
| NBNB | North Bay Naval Base |
| NEAS | Non-European Army Services |
| OC | Officer Commanding |
| PF | Permanent Force |
| RAF | Royal Air Force |
| RN | Royal Navy |
| RNVR(SA) | Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve - South African Division |
| SAAF | South African Air Force |
| SANF | South African Naval Force |

| | |
|---|---|
| SAMNS | South African Military Nursing Service |
| SAWAA | South African Women's Aviation Association |
| SAWAS | South African Women's Auxiliary Service |
| SDRI | Sub-Depot, Robben Island |
| SO | Staff Officer |
| UDF | Union Defence Force |
| WAAC | Women's Auxiliary Army Corps |
| WAC | Women's Army Corps |
| WAAF | Women's Auxiliary Air Force |
| WAAS | Women's Auxiliary Army Service |
| WADC | Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps |
| WAMPC | Women's Auxiliary Military Police Corps |
| WANS | Women's Auxiliary Naval Service |
| WDC | Women's Disciplinary Corps |
| WIO | Welfare and Information Offcier |
| WRNS | Women's Royal Naval Service |
| WVAF | Women's Voluntary Air Force |

# Chapter 1: Introduction


GEREED VIR ENIGE GEBEURLIKHEID

Wees Bereid Met

Zam-Buk

DIE voete word deesdae aan 'n groot inspanning onderwerp. Of hulle nou al in die gewapende magte is of ander Nasionale Diens verrig, of tuis is, is miljoene manne en vroue op hul voete vir ure langer as ooit tevore. Maar u voete sal nie pyn of u in die steek laat as u 'n gewoonte daarvan maak om hulle gereeld met Zam-Buk-salf te behandel nie.

**Wend Zam-Buk gereeld aan**

Die verfynde kruieolie in Zam-Buk word maklik in die vel geabsorbeer. As gevolg hiervan verdwyn pyn en swelling as met 'n towerslag. Zam-Buk genees blase en skaafplekke en verban iiddorings met wortel en tak. (Voordat u Zam-Buk aanwend, indien dit gerieflik is, baai eers die voete in warm water en maak deeglik droog.) Zam-Buk maak 'n groot verskil aan die gerief van u voete as u 'n gewoonte daarvan maak om dit gereeld te gebruik.

*1/6 of 3/9. By alle apteke en winkels*

¶ Zam-Buk is ook wonderlik vir die spoedige, suiwer genesing van snyplekke, kneusings, brandplekke en -wonde en ander wonde en kwesplekke. Dit is 'n bewese geneesmiddel vir elsseen, puisies, versiftigde seerplekke, verswerings, gekweste bene, gejeuk, douwurm, kopseer, pyn en aambeie. Koop vandag 'n blikkie Zam-Buk. Die hele gesin sal baat daarby vind.

Gebruik ZAM-BUK Gereeld

Figure 1.1: Ready for any eventuality – Advertisement for Zam-Buk

An advertisement for Zam-Buk herbal ointment appears in the 9 June 1943 edition of *Die Kerkbode* featuring a smiling woman in military uniform (Figure 1.1).[1] The previous edition features a similar advertisement but the woman in question is a housewife, not a servicewoman. These depictions epitomise the perceived role of "white"[2] South African women during wartime: as mother and as an auxiliary to the war effort – bound by her duty to serve both home and nation. Three years prior, the Union Defence Force (UDF) had begun to marshal white women into the military through the Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps (WADC). Over the course of South Africa's involvement in World War II, some 21 000 women would don uniform and be given rank as part of the Women's Auxiliary Army Service (WAAS), Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and Women's Auxiliary Naval Service (WANS). These were South Africa's first servicewomen. The reason for the creation of these women's auxiliary services is rooted in the UDF's unpreparedness for war in 1939.[3] Not only did the South African army, air force and navy have to be rebuilt from the ground up, but the complex dynamics of a population that was deeply divided in terms of their feelings about South Africa's entrance into the war, meant that (wo)manpower had to be drawn from wherever possible.[4] As with other waring nations, the women of the WADC were brought into the military fold to take over non-combatant jobs from

[1] Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) Archives, Stellenbosch, *Die Kerkbode*, 9 June 1943. *Die Kerkbode is* the gazette of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

[2] It must be noted that throughout this study the prevailing designations of what are essentially socially constructed racial terms are maintained in the contemporary setting of the study. Reference will be made to "black", "Indian", "coloured" and "white". In some instances the term "Black" refers to the collective noun of all people deemed not "white". To alleviate the use of unnecessary scare quotes throughout, these terms will not be placed in inverted commas, but this will be implied.

[3] Bill Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012), p. 41 & Ian Van Der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015), p. 135.

[4] Albert Grundlingh, "The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45", *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 3 (1999), pp. 351–365; John Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 1 (2008), pp. 60–84; Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*.

soldiers, to free these men to join the fight. An almost universal combat taboo restricted the role of women, and other marginalised groups as determined by the context, to that of "auxiliary". In many instances, this was a feeble attempt to sustain prevailing racist or misogynistic social hierarchies within these contexts. International historiography on World War II has increasingly shown how some overcame this combat taboo.

In South Africa, the changing socio-political climate of race relations, gender dynamics, class cleavages and nationalist politics shaped military culture. As military historian, Ian van der Waag has suggested, the military functioned as a microcosm of society.[5] But the UDF, as an umbrella military organisation, also had to negotiate the divisional differences between army, air force and navy. It is here that this dissertation questions the role of this divisional identity within the broader context of the UDF military culture, and the effects this had on the creation of the separate auxiliary arms which fell under these divisions.

The thesis question is fairly simple: How auxiliary were the women of the WADC? The response examines the nature of South African women's military service through the WADC in World War II. It explores how the military's entrenched distinction between active combat and auxiliary defined the place of women's wartime work and how this was further shaped by the military culture of the UDF. It will show the ways in which the constructions of auxiliary changed significance over the course of the war and how these were shaped by South Africa's specific confluence of race, class and gender mores.

These changes in the constructions of auxiliary, are reflected in the title of this thesis: "More than just Pretty Girls in Uniform: A Historical Study of Women's Military Roles during World War II, 1939-1945". This title is inspired by a quote in Lucy Bean's memoir *Strangers in our Midst*.[6] Bean was one of the founding members of the South African Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS), a civilian body from which the WAAS originated in 1940. She describes organising entertainment for troops on leave who were only concerned with getting their hands on "pretty girls and beer".[7] The women of the WADC were, however, much more than just pretty girls.

[5] Ian van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African armed forces, an historical perspective", paper presented at the Second South African Conference on Strategic Theory, "On Strategy; Military culture and African armed forces", co-hosted by Stellenbosch University and the Royal Danish Defence College, 22-23 September 2011, p. 14.
[6] Lucy Bean, *Strangers in Our Midst* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1970).
[7] Bean, p. 49.

## 1.1 Women Auxiliaries in World War II Literature: Historiographical Points of Departure

Histories of war and society investigate the mutual influences of wars and militaries on the societies in which they are embedded.[8] Through investigating the impact of war on societal aspects of race, class and gender, the military is reflected as a microcosm of the society that created it.[9] In order to understand the auxiliary placement of women in the UDF during World War II, it is necessary to examine the intersections between military masculinity, civilian femininity and military culture. This demonstrates how, and why, war has been written as masculine, and the ways in which women's roles in wartime have been conceptualised within this framework. From this theoretical discussion, the international literature on women in World War II foregrounds how gender and auxiliary have been framed within the concept of a combat taboo.[10] The importance, relevance and silences are made apparent when evaluating the existing historiography on South Africa's participation in World War II.

### 1.1.1 Military Masculinity and Civilian Femininity

Judith Butler furthered the idea of masculinity and femininity being contained in a series of gendered acts that are constructed through social signs such as language and gesture in her 1988 article "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory".[11] She argues that gender is not a stable identity but rather is encapsulated in a "stylised repetition of acts" that denote either masculinity or femininity.[12] In the context

[8] Robert M. Citino, "Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction", *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007), pp. 1070-1071.
[9] Ian Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective", p. 14.
[10] The concept of the combat taboo has been used by a number of scholars, including: Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Gerard J De Groot, "Whose Finger on the Trigger? Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries and the Female Combat Taboo", *War in History* 4, no. 4 (1997), pp. 434–453; Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 8, no. 4 (1999), pp. 605–624; Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), pp. 31–48; Penny Summerfield, "Public Memory or Public Amnesia? British Women of the Second World War in Popular Films of the 1950s and 1960s", *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 4 (2009), pp. 935–957.
[11] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4, (1988), p. 519.
[12] Butler, p. 520.

of this "stylised repetition of acts", the various behaviours associated with each gender are often referred to as "gender roles"'.[13]

Gender – and its associated norms and acts – is constructed and acted out by and for society's requirements. However, one's performance of masculinity or femininity is usually assigned in terms of biological sex. A link exists between, on the one hand, biological sex as either male or female and, on the other, the societal construct of gender as either masculine or feminine.[14] Biological determinants of sex categorise people as either male or female and, in so doing, this "[reflects] a belief that males and females are or should become different kinds of people".[15] In short, male bodies are expected to perform masculine acts. Yet, it must be noted that one is not always a definite indicator of the other.[16] Ruth Hubbard illustrates the overlapping of biological sex and societal gender well:

> If a society puts half its children in skirts and warns them not to move in ways that reveal their underpants, while putting the other half in jeans or overalls and encouraging them to climb trees and play strenuous out- door games; if later, during adolescence, the half that has been in trousers is exhorted to "eat like a growing boy" while the half in skirts is warned to watch their figure and not get fat; if the half in jeans trots around in sneakers or boots, while the half in skirts totters about on spike heels, then these two groups of people will differ biologically as well as socially.[17]

One of the reasons for the importance of gender to this study is that it is an idea that permeates all aspects of life, much like race or class.[18] Therefore, it is not only important to look at what gender means as a concept, but also to investigate what the perceived differences are between the genders – what it means to be masculine and what it means to be feminine.[19]

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[13] Often other terminology (such as gender stereotypes, or gender acts) is also employed. However, for the sake of simplicity, this research will employ the terms "gender roles" and "gender norms" to denote the actions and behaviours ascribed to each gender as being either masculine or feminine.
[14] Ruth Hubbard, "Constructing Sex Difference", *New Literary History* 19, no. 1, (1987), p. 129.
[15] Douglas Schrock & Michael Schwalbe, "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts", *Annual Review of Sociology* 35, (2009), p. 278.
[16] Hubbard: "Constructing Sex Difference", p. 129.
[17] Hubbard, p. 131.
[18] Raine Dozier, "Beards, Breasts, and Bodies: Doing Sex in a Gendered World", *Gender and Society* 19, no. 3, (2005), p. 297.
[19] It must be noted that the dichotomy between sex and gender is – arguably – an over simplification. Therefore this thesis will not spend time "squabbling over whether each trait displayed by a man is more rightly attributed to his maleness (sex) or masculinity (gender)", in the words of B. Fried as quoted in Hubbard, ("Constructing Sex Difference", p. 129). Rather, this very basic definition will be used to further explore the more complex issues surrounding women's inclusion into the predominantly masculine world of the military.

However, there is not one simple way to say that *this* is feminine and *that* is masculine as different societies each have their own markers of gender. Added to this complication is the fact that, even within these societies, there can be multiple "masculinities" or "femininities".

War narratives, both in the South African context and internationally, are overwhelmingly masculine. According to sociologist Weronika Grzebalska, this has led, in the context of World War II, to an "invisibility of women in mainstream narratives about the war".[20] This is, in part, because histories of war have often focused on "traditional military, diplomatic, or narrowly defined economic topics"; in other words categories that tend to conceal the complexities of women's roles in conflict.[21]

In addition to this, the differentiations between masculinity and femininity exist in sharper contrast than they do in the realm of civilian society. Political scientist Jennifer G. Mathers suggests that gender norms held by society maintain that women and men can, and must, perform different roles.[22] In this context, the military has been described by scholar Meredeth Thurshen as, "a male preserve, run by men and for men according to masculine ideas of male bonding, male privilege, and, militarist values derived from definitions of masculinity".[23] Additionally, historian Joanna Bourke has claimed that "militarism and violence have been identified with manliness".[24] In the context of the military, it must be noted that, as soldiers have traditionally been men, they have often defined themselves by what they are not. Thus, in this case, the feminine becomes the "other" to the ideal masculinity of the combat soldier. According to sociologist Jacklyn Cock, men are the "historic authors of organised violence".[25]

Feminist scholar Laura Sjoberg states the obvious prevailing perception when she said "Men die in wars".[26] Men have long been the overwhelming majority of conventional soldiers, and soldiers die in war. What is suggested is that dying in combat or having the potential of being killed in combat, informs the definition of a "real" soldier. Both the physical act and location therefore determine the confines of soldier and auxiliary. There is a strongly held

[20] Weronika Grzebalska, "Between Gender Blindness and Nationalist Herstory", *Baltic Worlds* X, no. 4 (2017), p. 71.
[21] Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al., eds., "Introduction," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 2.
[22] Jennifer G. Mathers, "Women and State Military Forces," in *Women and Wars*, ed. Carol Cohn (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), p. 126.
[23] Meredith Turshen, "Women's War Stories," in *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa*, ed. Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya (London: Zed Books, 1998), p. 5.
[24] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London and New York: Granta Press, 1999), p. 310.
[25] Elshtain, *Women and War*, 1987, p. 164.
[26] Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict* (Combridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014), p. 57.

connection between "man" and "soldier", or between "man" and "war". Men are seen as "wars' planners, wars' heroes, and wars' disgraced vanquished".[27] From this connection has stemmed the creation of a particular meaning attached to "masculinity". The reasons for the creation of a particular military masculinity lie in the notion of hegemonic masculinity, as termed by sociologist Raewyn Connell, a singular normalised and central concept of masculinity against which, other, subordinate masculinities, are measured.[28] It is through this hierarchy that some men are considered less equal than others. The most obvious examples would be the enlistment of Black men as auxiliaries rather than combatants. Drawing on this, political scientist Joshua S. Goldstein expands on this list of what he terms "warrior qualities in men".[29] The recurring qualities that warriors are imbibed with across cultures are: physical courage, endurance, strength and skill, and honour.[30] As such, the military as an institution and as a society, extols its own specific and normative vision of masculinity, and war itself can be seen as a gendering activity that "ritually marks the gender of all members of a society, whether or not they are combatants".[31] In South Africa, the historical reputation of the military prowess of black tribes, for example, was used as a way to exclude them from combatant roles for fear of a black uprising against white domination.[32]

The maintenance of the military as a male domain is reflected in the numerous theories that have been built to keep women out of the masculine military. These tend to outline women's supposed weakness and unsuitability for soldiering. Much of this reasoning is rooted in the need to maintain women as the "other". This othering is often termed in the form of dichotomies: male/female, civilian/military, protector/protected, life-giver/life-taker and home/front.

Women are seen as a delicate entity; they are "in need of protection but incapable of protecting themselves".[33] This division has been institutionalised and solidified in the military. Men, as a part of the military, are soldiers, while women are outside of it as civilians and are,

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[27] Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict*, p. 57.
[28] For a thorough discussion of Connell's conception of hegemonic masculinity, see: R. W. Connell, *Masculinities: Second Edition* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005); R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept", *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005), pp. 829–859; Nikki Wedgewood, "Connell's Theory of Masculinity - Its Origins and Influences on the Study of Gender", *Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009), pp. 329–339.
[29] Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press, 2001), p. 266.
[30] Goldstein, pp. 266-267.
[31] Higonnet et al., "Introduction," p. 4.
[32] B.P. Willan, "The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918", *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 1 (1978), p. 63.
[33] Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict*, p. 28.

therefore, "not-soldiers". Political philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain phrases this dichotomy as the male "protector" and the female "protected".[34] Or, as historian Mary Louise Robert styles it: "rescuer" and "rescued".[35] It is due to this that women have for so long been excluded from this institution. The military needed to uphold itself as a bastion of a specific brand of hegemonic masculinity and, therefore, excluded those who did not adhere to this ideal. So women are designated as the ultimate outsiders. According to Elshtain: "women were the guardians of the family; men, the protectors of the state".[36] World War II called for a much broader inclusivity, set within gendered paradigms. South Africa was no exception. However, these boundaries were challenged in the public imagination in the historical writings about the South African War, 1899-1902. Unfortunately, the role of women as combatants occurred in the guerrilla phase of the so-called non-conventional war. As such, these possibilities remained inconceivable in the formation of the formal military structures of the UDF.

Furthering the division between protector and protected is physical space. The battlefront is where the soldiers-as-men supposedly enact their role as defenders against the enemy who threatens those who must be protected: the women and children who remain at home. In this contrived separation founded on gendered exclusion "[the] female-associative space equal[s] civilian and home front, and [the] male-associative space equal[s] combatant and war front".[37] The wives, mothers and daughters who are left behind are often portrayed as a soldier's reason to fight and stay alive. The two spheres are separated so that women in the sphere of "home" can fulfil their sanctioned feminine roles in order for the masculinity of soldiers to be reinforced. According to Goldstein: "normal life becomes feminized [*sic*.] and combat masculinized [*sic*.]".[38] From this, women have, according to Elshtain, been classified as "history's designated non-combatants".[39]

However, with the advent of total warfare in the twentieth century, the division between home and front could no longer be exclusively upheld by the geographical distance from the

[34] Elshtain, *Women and War*, 1987. p. 3.
[35] Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 57.
[36] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Women and War," in *Oxford Illustrated History of Modern War*, ed. Charles Townshend (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 307.
[37] Deirdre Osborne, "'I Do Not Know about Politics or Governments … I Am a Housewife': The Female Secret Agent and the Male War Machine in Occupied France (1942–5)", *Women: A Cultural Review* 17, no. 1 (2006), p. 43.
[38] Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, p. 301.
[39] Elshtain, *Women and War*, 1987, p. 303.

place of battle: the line between battlefront and homefront become blurred.[40] Mass armies were born – armies that demanded "the commitment of the nation's material and technical resources".[41] Civil society was now called upon administratively to aid with military mobilisation. All resources were expected to lend support to the armed forces, including human, financial and cultural elements.[42] By the outbreak of World War II, many of the world's militaries had begun to see the use of bringing the domain of female participation into the uniformed fold. In the later 1930s, the Spanish Republic had formed female militia forces. In Russia there were the "Night Witches". The French and Belgian resistance relied greatly on their women partisans. And, in Great Britain, and other allied nations, many women were encouraged to join a range of auxiliary forces. In other words by the onset of World War II, not only had the lines between soldiers and civilians, and home and front, become obscured,[43] but "the realities of the two world wars contradicted the myth that war compels men to go forth and fight in order to protect their women, who remain passive and secure at home".[44] This means that the home/front divide now became ideological in order to keep the protector and the protected apart; thus retaining "correct" traditional gender roles, as in civilian society.[45]

There are two distinct ways that this ideological division of civilian femininity and military masculinity has manifested itself when women were brought into war work, both typified from examples in the British context. First, are the ways in which emphasis is placed on female soldiers retaining their feminine qualities despite their presence in this masculine world. Women soldiers must always be women first, and soldiers second, lest they become tainted as failed (masculine) women. A key example of this is the emphasis that has often been placed on women's grooming and their display of so-called correct female etiquette. This often occurs when women are first included in state militaries. English women who were called up for war work during World War II through the National Service (No. 2) Act of December 1941 have noted that they chose certain branches of the women's auxiliary corps over others due to the attractiveness of the uniforms.[46] Uniforms therefore serve a dual purpose of creating

[40] Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al., eds., "Introduction," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 1.
[41] Pierre Purseigle, "Home Fronts: The Mobilisation of Resources for Total War", in *Cambridge History of War: Volume 4, War and the Modern World*, ed. Roger Chickering, Dennis Showalter, and Hans Van de Ven (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 258.
[42] Purseigle, p. 258.
[43] Purseigle, p. 258.
[44] Higonnet et al., "Introduction", p. 1.
[45] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 337.
[46] Anne De Courcy, *Debs at War: 1939-1945 How Wartime Changed Their Lives* (London: Phoenix, 2005), p. 71.

uniformity and comformity but also inadvertently enticing new recruits. To do this, the uniform must be both practical and appealing and that appeal, at times, reinforces male chauvinism.[47]

A second way in which the military's ideological separation between women's civilian femininity and their masculine war work is maintained is through women's general exemption from conscription. Even though British women were, in a sense, conscripted through the National Service (No. 2) Act of December 1941, this was always seen as a temporary arrangement necessitated by a national emergency; and as an arrangement that was carefully constructed to exclude women from combat. Military service (and with it, conscription) is closely linked to conceptions surrounding (male) citizenship. This link stems from the notion that "the soldier is a citizen and the citizen is a soldier".[48] What this means is that, in order for a young man to be seen as a fully-fledged citizen, he must complete military service. As soldier-citizen, young men receive "equal civic, political, and social rights" in exchange for his service and sacrifice to the military.[49] The opportunity to be recognised as fully-fledged citizen through military service is not usually available to women. The contribution that is expected of them in return for citizen status is becoming the mother of future soldiers.

War and warfare have historically been associated with men and masculinity. This means that the narratives and histories of war are most often couched in terms of men's actions, men's experiences, or men's suffering in wartime. While this does tell a crucial part of the story of war, by concentrating on war and the experience of military service purely through the eyes of men, much of the story is lost. Due to women's long-standing exclusion from the military sphere, the story of women and war is one of how women have either directly or indirectly been victims of war despite their status "as those who mourned or cheered or stalwartly persevered rather than those who fought".[50] However, despite this exclusion, women have always participated on the fringes of war; during times of conflict women have fulfilled a number of roles. Women have contributed to the proper functioning of soldiers' lives in a number of ways. What this makes clear, is that, regardless of the fact that the military has traditionally been a strongly (male) gendered arena, wartime is not necessarily so.

[47] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 309.
[48] Orna Sasson-Levy, "Contradictory Consequences of Mandatory Conscription: The Case of Women Secretaries in the Israeli Military," *Gender and Society* 21, no. 4 (2007), p. 848.
[49] Orna Sasson-Levy and Sarit Amram-Katz, "Gender Integration in Israeli Officer Training: Degendering and Regendering the Military", *Signs* 33, no. 1 (2007), p. 109.
[50] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 336.

The various ways in which women have experienced or participated in war can be categorised in certain archetypes. In her book *Colonels & Cadres: War & Gender in South Africa*, Cock lists ten ways in which women have historically been seen to participate in war. These are categorised in terms of "women as": pretexts for war in the vein of Helen of Troy; wives and prostitutes providing rest and recreation; entertainers providing distraction; victims; sympathetic nurses; seductive spies; cheerleaders or "castrating bitches", who encourage men to join the fight; women as the mothers of soldiers; and, finally, women as co-operative citizens.[51] In order to avoid perpetuating these "limiting gendered tropes" as women's only wartime experiences, Sjoberg's three categories of "women and" are also useful as a lens through which to look at women's roles in, and experiences o,f wartime, particularly World War II.[52]

The first of Sjoberg's categories is "Women and war preparation". This describes the ways in which women served as a support system that "provide[s] the militaries with what they need to fight".[53] In this experience, women mobilise families and other women for war, they support and motivate their soldiers, and they are asked to be of sexual service to troops. The second is "Women and war economies". War changes the way that economies function. The departure from peacetime normalcy forces women to find new economic roles.[54] It is here where women taking on previously male-dominated jobs in order to serve their nation's economic war effort can be placed. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the present study, Sjoberg demarcated "Women and war-fighting", those who experience "wars and conflicts in militaries, in non-state armed groups, and on battlefields".[55]

Women's wartime roles run the gamut of images from the sexual Mata Hari spy to the caring Florence Nightingale nurse, to the more homely role of the encouraging sweetheart. There have even been a handful who have raised arms themselves, becoming what political philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain labels, the "fighting few".[56] Despite their constant presence on the side-lines of male-dominated war fighting, women's wartime stories are almost always couched in terms of these images. So much so that they have almost become archetypes or tropes of the feminine war effort. It has been argued that the relative invisibility of women's

[51] Jacklyn Cock, *Colonels & Cadres: War & Gender in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 103-104.
[52] Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict*, p. 31. The final category – "Women in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction" – will not be explored here as it does not directly relate to the study at hand.
[53] Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict*, p. 32.
[54] Sjoberg, pp. 34-35.
[55] Sjoberg, p. 39.
[56] Elshtain, *Women and War*, 1987, p. 163.

war stories is due to the fact that their limited appearances in the histories of war are described in terms of these so-called "limiting gendered tropes".[57] This means that the portrayals of female wartime roles are often partial or inaccurate representations.[58] Women's exclusion from war has become so ingrained in popular thought that uniting the word "woman" with "war" seems almost paradoxical. Historian Margaret H. Darrow illustrates this juxtaposition well. Writing about the experiences of French Nurses in World War I, she states that "few writers had placed women 'during' or, most daringly, 'in' the war … the most common connection was 'and'".[59]

The linking of masculinity with the military and femininity with the civilian means that female military service is seen as an oddity: reserved for times of absolute crisis.[60] Even then, it is always negotiated in ways that preserve the dichotomy between correctly-sanctioned male and female behaviours.[61] The gendered dichotomies and archetypes of women's participation in wartime are useful as a lens through which to view female participation in the masculine military.

A further lens to understanding the impact of these dictotomies on women's social status during and after the war is the double helix. Margaret Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet's metaphor demonstrates that, paradoxically, war both leads to progress in women's social status but also maintains gender norms. Gendered dichotomies are preserved despite the changes that wartime brings about in men's and women's social roles. Using the metaphor of two intertwined and opposed strands, the "persistent system of gender" can be visualised.[62] During the two world wars, the normal structure of the double helix – where the female strand stands opposed and subordinate to the male strand – shifts. Women's societal standing shifts as they undertake war work previously reserved for men.[63] However, when the war ends, the double helix returns to its pre-war power structure. This means that the acceptance of women into male dominated fields of work – both civilian and military – fails to erode traditional gender roles because the masculine nature of women's wartime work is kept at a distance to preserve

[57] Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict*, p. 27.
[58] Sjoberg, p. 26.
[59] Margaret H. Darrow, "French Volunteer Nursing and the Myth of War Experience in World War I," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (1996), p. 80.
[60] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 324.
[61] Mathers, "Women and State Military Forces", p. 131.
[62] Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 34.
[63] Higonnet and Higonnet, p. 35.

"correct" feminine roles.[64] This is illustrated in the fact that women were kept in non-combatant, auxiliary military roles, and not used – with the exception of Soviet Russia – as frontline soldiers, therefore making their military service acceptable because it was temporary and distanced from fully "masculine" war work.

While Higonnet and Higonnet's double helix succinctly illustrates the wartime progression and peacetime regression of women's social roles, they also point out that in order to "need to hear the polyphony of historical experience, especially that of women",[65] it is necessary to break out of the double helix model and move beyond binary models.

Thinking *only* in terms of these dichotomies is an oversimplification. It can serve to reinforce what Ukrainian scholar Olesya Khromeychuk describes as "societies' ongoing inability to see women in roles that do not fit traditional gender norms".[66] In addition to this, navigating complex narratives only within these lenses can reproduce traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity and the place of women in World War II and its histories. False universalism should be avoided and national, military and personal aspects must also be taken into consideration so as not "to merely add women to the picture without reframing the picture itself".[67] Therefore, to avoid simply reproducing the double helix, their roles must be interpreted as more than just a universal "other" to combatant military masculinity.[68]

It is the present universal WADC experience which dominates the existing literature on white women's involvement in World War II which this dissertation intends to unpack. The aforementioned observations of women and war will be investigated within the various divisions of the WADC and will also incorporate some of the personal narratives of the women who were attached to these divisions which clearly contest some of these broader generalisations. Therefore, the place of South African women in World War II is framed around the South African context of military cultures, racial hierarchies and gender divisions.

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[64] Maren Roger and Ruth Leiserowitz, "Introduction," in *Gender and World War II in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2004, p. 9.
[65] Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 45.
[66] Olesya Khromeychuk, "Experiences of Women at War," *Baltic Worlds* X, no. 4 (2017), p. 59.
[67] Grzebalska, "Between Gender Blindness and Nationalist Herstory", p. 72.
[68] Higonnet and Higonnet, "The Double Helix", p. 39.

### 1.1.2 Military Culture and the UDF

According to Dale Herspring, culture can be conceptualised as the intersection of dominant customs, philosophies, traditions, norms and values which are shared within an institution and dictate appropriate patterns of behaviour.[69] Military culture, according to Herspring, "regulate[s] the lives of those in uniform".[70] It is centred on beliefs and norms concerning the best ways to fight and win wars.[71] In the words of South African military historian Ian van der Waag, military culture is "a crucial indicator of how armed forces think, how they prepare for war and how those wars are fought".[72] What is suggested is that there is a "significant homogeneity of approach" amongst members of a nation's military.[73] Those who will "fit in" with the prevailing military culture are most likely to be attracted to joining the ranks, and will be most likely to succeed.[74]

According to Van der Waag, military culture unfolds on two levels; what he terms "military culture one" and "military culture two".[75] Military culture one is elitist. It is shaped by military elites: general staff and senior officers. This (re)creation of a military identity is usually centred on instilling obedience towards superiors and concern for comrades. The upholding of hierarchies is crucial – a soldier of lower rank must be able to take orders from his superior.

Military culture two is "more embracing" and is rooted in the visible symbols of military belonging: "regimental routines, physical appearance, uniforms and buttons, shoulder flashes and flags".[76] In order to build its own cultural identity, the military first breaks down the identities of new soldiers before recreating them according to its own norms.[77] This is necessary, as Goldstein argues, because "war does not come naturally to men … so warriors

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[69] George G. Gordon, "Industry Determinants of Organizational Culture", *The Academy of Management Review* 16, no. 2 (1991), pp. 396–415; Dale R. Herspring, "Creating Shared Responsibility through Respect for Military Culture: The Russian and American Cases", *Public Administration Review* 71, no. 4 (2011), pp. 519–529.
[70] Dale Herspring, "Creating Shared Responsibility through Respect for Military Culture: The Russian and American Cases", p. 521.
[71] Jeffrey W. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II", *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994), p. 109.
[72] Ian Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces," in *On Military Culture: Theory, Practice and African Armed Forces*, ed. Francois Vreÿ, Abel Esterhuyse, and Thomas Mandrup (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), p. 182.
[73] Frank Ledwidge, "Cracking On : British Military Culture and Doctrine," in *Losing Small Wars* (Yale University Press, 2011), p. 137.
[74] Ledwidge, p. 137.
[75] Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective", p. 3.
[76] Van der Waag, p. 3.
[77] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 70.

require intense socialisation and training in order to fight effectively".[78] An obvious way in which the recreation of correct military masculine identity occurs is through the homogenisation of appearance – soldiers are stripped of individual identity and given uniform clothing and hair-cuts. It is through these outward markers of the military that recruits' self-perception is changed from civilian to military.[79] The same process of uniform and uniformity is probed in greater detail within this dissertation.

Some aspects of military culture are universal. These are mostly aspects of discipline and rank structure, such as saluting senior officers and the wearing of uniform. There can also be differences in military culture between different branches of a nation's armed forces. The British Army for example, has been described as a "tribal panoply of regiments and corps" each with their own heritage and traditions.[80] These cultural elements naturally differ from those of the Royal Navy or Royal Air Force. Thus it is also possible to speak of military sub-cultures. This is particularly relevant in the case of the UDF during World War II: each branch of the UDF had its own military sub-culture which was reflected in the branches of the WADC. This observation is pivotal to the arguments put forward in this dissertation.

Other aspects are country-specific.[81] Military cultures are shaped by a complex set of "intersecting and interacting factors" that are influenced by the country in which the military is embedded.[82] In the words of political scientist Patricia Shields, "the military is shaped by the culture and belief systems of society and mirrors practices of the larger culture".[83] Race, class and gender aspects of military cultures are, therefore, unique to the society in which they were created.

Masculinity permeates the different levels of military culture – military culture one and two, as well as divisional or national differences. As outlined above, the military is historically a male space and its culture is usually defined as masculine. Soldiers must be convinced to, or socialised into, conforming to a specific pattern of practices. Examples of these practices are: strength, courage, aggression, and group solidarity.[84] In order to prove himself, the soldier must

[78] Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, p. 252.
[79] Nathan Joseph and Nicholas Alex, "The Uniform : A Sociological Perspective," *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (1972), p. 721.
[80] Ledwidge, "Cracking On : British Military Culture and Doctrine", p. 138.
[81] Herspring, "Creating Shared Responsibility through Respect for Military Culture: The Russian and American Cases", p. 521.
[82] Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective." p. 2.
[83] Patricia M. Shields, "Dynamic Intersection of Military and Society," in *Handbook of Military Sciences*, ed. A. Sookermany, 2020, p. 10.
[84] R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept", p. 845.

become the opposite of feminine. He must prove himself to be a "real man" according to the military's idea of what constitutes a "real man". [85] The man-as-soldier must conform to the masculine ideals of the military society and he must prove himself able to meet the terms of this conformity; becoming soldier-as-man. Due to the fact that soldiers have, for the most part of history, been men, an association has arisen between the ultimately masculine soldier and the military as an institution of "unadulterated, hyper-masculin[ity]", in the words of political scientist Regina Titunik.[86]

The main thrust of the argument behind the historical exclusion of women from the military sphere is deeply rooted in the need to maintain the separation between ideals of military masculinity and civilian femininity. Women and their associated femininity threaten military masculine identity and, by extension, the prevailing masculine military culture. The greatest fear surrounding the presence of women in this traditionally masculine world is that the men would become demoralised, bonding between comrades-in-arms would be disrupted, and the masculine warrior ethic would be destroyed. In short, women in the military would "symbolically castrate the armed forces".[87] However, the arguments are often phrased in ways that emphasise the need to protect women – those labelled as the "protected" – from the life-threatening risks of war. By doing so, military society is maintained and protected from being influenced by the "other" of civilian femininity. This division remains when women, like the members of the WADC, are drawn into the military framing them as auxiliary rather than combatant, even when the boundary has clearly been crossed.

Not only did gendered issues exist in South Africa's military during World War II but another social concern framed the place of auxiliaries in the UDF: race. As discussed by historian Brian P. Willan, the social and political context of pre-apartheid South Africa meant that in the UDF racial divisions between black and white had to be maintained out of social fears of disruption.[88] This created a dominant military culture that was framed not only as masculine but also as white. This meant that black men who were brought into war work were also unjustly classified as auxiliary.

Understanding military culture (or sub-cultures) not only explains how the institution has been able to create its own conception of military masculinity, but also how it has been

[85] Regina F. Titunik, "The Myth of the Macho Military", *Polity* 40, no. 2 (2008), p. 139.
[86] Titunik, p. 138.
[87] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 338.
[88] B.P. Willan, "The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918", p. 63 .

able to dictate femininity as civilian.[89] As a microcosm of society, the norms and issues reflected in military culture provide a lens through which to examine the issues that defined South Africa's servicewomen as non-combatant auxiliaries as well as the ways in which these women adopted and adapted to their new military identities.

### 1.1.3 The "Herstorical Turn": Women Auxiliaries and World War II

There is a growing tendency within the literature of women's experiences in war – particularly those drawn into military service during World War II – to raise questions as to how the War has been remembered in terms of the impact (both positive and negative) it had on the lives of women involved in the war effort. This is what Weronika Grzebalska, writing in the context of Polish women in World War II, has described as the "herstorical turn".[90] These writings are framed around the opportunities that entering male dominated war work (both military and civilian) opened for women; and the consequences of this once peace dawned.[91] According to Pamela Wakewich and Helen Smith, popular histories of the War have often "caricature[d] women's wartime contributions as selfless, heroic and temporary responses to the unnatural work and family circumstances brought on by war".[92] While these popular images acknowledge women's wartime contributions, the authors explain, they also "oversimplify and render invisible the complexity of women's wartime working lives".[93] This oversimplification is further complicated by the tendency to group participants in the War into the categories of combatant and non-combatant.[94] This means that in spite of the "herstorical turn" women's histories are often relegated to a "feminine appendix" within the larger (masculine) histories of World War II.[95] The elasticity of women's work and their role in the war is therefore neglected. Every attempt has been made in this dissertation to tell "herstory", not as an appendix to "(his)tory" but this has methodologically necessitated that this be scaffolded by the history of the UDF.

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[89] J. M. Silva, "A New Generation of Women? How Female ROTC Cadets Negotiate the Tension between Masculine Military Culture and Traditional Femininity", *Social Forces* 87, no. 2 (2008), p. 938.
[90] Grzebalska, "Between Gender Blindness and Nationalist Herstory", p. 71.
[91] Dorothy Sheridan, "Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain", *Oral History* 18, no. 1 (2018), p. 32.
[92] Pamela Wakewich and Helen Smith, "The Politics of 'Selective' Memory: Re-Visioning Canadian Women's Wartime Work in the Public Record", *Oral History* 34, no. 2 (2006), p. 58.
[93] Wakewich and Smith, p. 58.
[94] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), p. 34.
[95] Grzebalska, "Between Gender Blindness and Nationalist Herstory", p. 75.

There is a strong international body of scholarship investigating the roles of women in World War II, both in terms of popular and academic histories. Those women who lived in close proximity to the conflict – British and continental European women – had the largest part to play in these hostilities – and also have the most detailed historiography. This is also true for some of those at a distance; American women, for example, whose histories are filled with the 1940s worker imagery of figures like the famed Rosie the Riveter.

By December 1941, all medically fit single women, and childless widows, in Britain were required to be available for war work through the National Service (No. 2) Act of 1941.[96] These women worked in a variety of wartime services, including labouring in factories and hospitals, or joining one of the women's services. Often the wartime contribution of these women was painted patronisingly as little more than spunky young girls doing their bit for "King and Country". This was an attitude not helped by the memoirs of upper-class British women, some of whom saw their wartime service as a break from the hardships of chaperones and coming out.[97] In the context of Britain, in particular, women's voices ring loud regarding their place in the war effort. However, popular histories do not often look past the framing of these women's services as "auxiliary".[98] This unquestioned framing of women's war-time service as auxiliary is especially apparent in the mass of popular histories of women's World War II service. *Debs at War: 1939-1945 How Wartime Changed Their Lives* by Anne De Courcy and *Millions like Us: Women's Lives during the Second World War* by Virginia Nicholson are two examples of this. Both books provide valuable insight into the lives, motivations and thoughts of women who joined British women's services as well as their expierences as ordinary women "who rose to the demands of history".[99] Despite the depth of understanding that these popular works provide, there is often limited evaluation of these women's positions as anything but helpful auxiliaries.

Academic histories of allied women's auxiliary services form part of a larger historiographical trend that dates to the 1970s, when the narrative of war as a purely masculine

[96] De Courcy, *Debs at War: 1939-1945 How Wartime Changed Their Lives*, p. 71.
[97] De Courcy, p. 71.
[98] An exception to the framing of women's World War II service as auxiliary in popular histories can be found in works on women who were involved in espionage; see, for example, J. Tickell, *The story of a British Agent*. (Chapman & Hall: London, 1949) & C. Seymore-Jones, *She Landed by Moonlight* (Hodder & Stoughton: Great Britain, 2013).
[99] Virginia Nicholson, *Millions like Us: Women's Lives during the Second World War* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 77.

phenomenon began to be critiqued in Europe and the United States.[100] Both Corinna Peniston-Bird and Penny Summerfield have written extensively on issues of gender that arose through the use of women in various auxiliary services in Britain during World War II.[101] Their works give invaluable insight into the use of gender norms to (re)construct women's military service in Britain during World War II as simply "auxiliary" (as well as ways in which this may have been subverted).

Women have been excluded from participating in combat due to ideological conventions of gender. This exclusion leads to the "combat taboo". Corinna Peniston-Bird, a historian focusing on gender and war, outlines the combat taboo as a state where only men could bear arms which "ensured that the militarized body was constructed as male, even though it was experienced by both genders".[102] This concept is also explored by Gerard J. De Groot in his study on the performance of gender dynamics in mixed-gender anti-aircraft batteries in Britain. He concludes that while "some women wore masculine uniforms, operated masculine instruments, and participated in the masculine process of killing" they were still seen as a "distinct group of interlopers whose presence was tolerable only because it was temporary".[103] Similar investigations about gender concerns and the impact of these on women's military service have been the main focus in studies on the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps in the US.[104] These works give valuable insight into how women in military auxiliary army services in Britain and the US were framed as auxiliary based on the constructions of gender divisions in these national contexts and show how the need to maintain these were shaped within the military cultures of these Allied nations. As such they provide framework that can be used to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between South African women's auxiliaries and their international sisters.

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[100] Françoise Thébaud, "Understanding Twentieth-Century Wars through Women and Gender Forty Years of Historiography", *Clio*, no. 39 (2014), p. 153.
[101] Penny Summerfield, "Gender and War in the Twentieth Century", *The International Hitory Review* 19, no. 1 (1997), pp. 2–15; Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 9, no. 2 (2000), pp. 231–255; C. Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), pp. 31-48.
[102] Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", p. 32.
[103] Gerard J. De Groot, "'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War," *History* 82, no. 265 (1997), p. 92.
[104] Yashila Permeswaran, "The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps: A Compromise to Overcome the Conflict of Women Serving in the Army", *The History Teacher* 42, no. 1 (2008), pp. 95–111; Jennifer Nichol Stewart, "Wacky Times: An Analysis of the WAC in World War II and Its Effects on Women", *International Social Science Review* 75, no. 1 (2000), pp. 26–37; Melissa Ziobro, "Skirted Soldiers: The Women's Army Corps and Gender Integration of the U.S. Army", *On Point* 17, no. 4 (2012), pp. 36–43.

Perhaps due to the glamour of flight, the stories of the airwomen of World War II have more often been told than those of their sisters in other women's services. Scholars internationally – and in Britain in particular – have paid attention to the formation, deployment and gendered issues surrounding the incorporation of women into the Air Force. These include Julie Fountain's study on British women pilots in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA),[105] and Stephanie Spencer's work on the use of fiction as a recruitment tool for the WAAF in Britain.[106] Equally important is Tessa Stone's work "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War".[107]

Stone argues that World War II:

> posed an arguably unique challenge to the characterisation of war as being primarily a masculine affair, and was a time when force of circumstance meant that gendered definitions – of work and of behaviour – were, if not up for grabs, then at least open to question. It was imperative that women entered various domains and undertook various tasks that had previously been considered 'male' …[108]

She finds that in the context of the Air Force, airwomen's self-identity and status as auxiliaries were not constructed purely by gender but also in terms of the Royal Air Force's (RAF) specific construction of the auxiliary/not auxiliary dichotomy. In this military culture, the division between auxiliaries and combatants is based on the division between ground crew and flight crew: those who flew and those who did not. This reinforces that need to examine the intersection of divisional military sub-cultures and social gender norms and how both of these defined placement of women as auxiliaries across the WADC within specific corps. A significant difference is visible between both the airforce and the navy in this dissertation.

One area where the international literature about women's participation as military auxiliaries during World War II is lacking, is scholarship on women's auxiliary naval forces. The women's naval auxiliaries of World War II have fared better in popular histories and

[105] Julie Fountain, "'The Most Interesting Work a Woman Can Perform in Wartime': The Exceptional Status of British Women Pilots during the Second World War", *Cultural and Social History* 13, no. 2 (2016), pp. 213–229.
[106] Stephanie Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", *Paedagogica Historica* 52, no. 1–2 (2016), pp. 137–153.
[107] Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 8, no. 4 (1999), pp. 605–624.
[108] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 605.

memoirs, than in academic texts. [109] This is particularly obvious in the case of the WRNS. A spate of both memoirs and commemorative histories have been produced by the Wrens. These include, but are by no means limited to, *The WRNS: A history of the Women's Royal Naval Service* by M.H. Fletcher, a former director of the WRNS, and *The Wrens 1917-1977: A history of the Women's Royal Naval Service* by Ursula Stuart Mason published in conjunction with the 60th anniversary of the founding of the service.[110] As commemorative texts, these are descriptive rather than analytical. While they do provide useful information about uniform, discipline, rank and work, they serve only to tell the story, not question it. These histories of individual women's auxiliary services showcase the particular circumstances and debates that influenced that characters of women's wartime service in a nation's army, air force or navy.

A trend can be observed in this not insignificant body of scholarship about the women auxiliaries of World War II. The bulk of historical studies tend to focus on either individual services. Outside of popular histories, like those of De Courcy and Nicholson, few scholarly works take the wider view of women's auxiliary services. A key exception to this is *Sisters in Arms: Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War* by British historian Jeremy A. Crang.[111] Here he traces the development of the ATS, WAAF and WRNS from the interwar years to post-war demobilisation and the creation of permanent women's services. Crang not only gives detailed context about these women's services but – by looking at all three simultaneously – the similarities and differences between the military cultures of the ATS, WAAF and WRNS are highlighted. Additionally, the study delves into themes relating to training, work discipline and more quotidian matters, covering a number of features of the lived experiences of these British servicewomen. His approach is employed in this study.

In order to better understand the position of women in the military during World War II, it is also important to compare how women's place in militaries differed in various military and national contexts. American historian D'Ann Campbell's 1993 article, entitled "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union",[112] provides context for women's military service in four diverse nations.

[109] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Uniform : The World War II Experiment", *Military Affairs* 51, no. 3 (1987), p. 137.
[110] M.H. Fletcher, *The WRNS: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service* (London: B.T. Batsford Limited, 1989) & Ursula Stuart Mason, *The Wrens 1917-77: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service* (England: Educational Explorers Ltd., 1977).
[111] Jeremy A. Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[112] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1993), pp. 301–323.

Critically, she demonstrates how the military service of women as "auxiliary" can be seen as a transitional stage in their development as soldiers.[113] This shows that different nations' militaries have different ways of framing women's military service as auxiliary. The most significant difference is between Allied nations, like Britain and the US, and Soviet Russia. Women in Great Britain and the United States were chiefly bound to auxiliary roles before a small component slowly became integrated as potential combatants and then only on a limited scale. This was mainly achieved through their integration into anti-aircraft batteries.[114] In contrast, Soviet women were directly mobilised into combat and, therefore, bypassed the auxiliary stage.

The need to maintain the dichotomies of protector/protected and home/front was a key concern in Allied nations' decisions to make use of their womanpower during World War II. However, for the Soviet Union this "proved an unaffordable luxury".[115] After the German invasion of Russia in 1941, Soviet women were mobilised *en masse*. Agricultural workers in the Soviet Union were practically all women; by the end of the conflict the same was true in industry.[116] Not only did they serve the Motherland in traditional roles as nurses and in a variety of non-combatant, auxiliary military jobs, but women were also fully integrated into the Red Army as combatants. Some 800 000 women were mobilised in the Red Army; more than half of these in front-line units.[117] In the words of Anna Reid – an author and journalist who focuses on the history of Eastern Europe – "the Soviet Union sent more women into combat during the Second World War than any other nation before or since".[118] So many Russian women served in the Soviet military that over 100 000 won military honours.[119] In fact, at Victory Day parades in the Soviet Union, the division of the crowds was not between male veterans and female civilians but simply between those "who had been to the front and those who had not".[120]

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[113] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 318.
[114] Campbell, p. 307-308.
[115] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 319.
[116] Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, *A History of Their Own - Women in Europe from Prehistory to Present Vol.II* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 308.
[117] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 318.
[118] Anna Reid, "Introduction," in *Avenging Angels: Soviet Women in the Eastern Front (1941-45)*, Lyuba Vinogradova (London: MacLehouse Press, 2017), p. 15.
[119] Anderson and Zinsser, *A History of Their Own - Women in Europe from Prehistory to Present Vol.II*, p. 312.
[120] Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, n.d.), p. 2.

The question that arises is why? Soviet ideology and propaganda held that women and men were socially and legally equal.[121] The Kremlin had complete control over the narrative; so much so that "organized public opinion was hardly a factor".[122] What is evident from the Russian case is that, just as barriers against women's military participation are built on ideology, so too can women's military integration. This, however, is not to suggest that conflict between the socialist ideology put forward by the state and traditional conceptions of correct gender roles did not fester on the battlefields. The position of Russian women as combatants was an oddity; something only permissable due to a crisis in manpower.[123] Women would replace men but as Khromeychuk describes, women in the Red Army were seen as substitutes for men, not soldiers.[124]

In her article that extends Campbell's comparison by focussing only on women's military participation in Britain and the USSR, Nataliia Zalietok shows that in spite of the auxiliary/combatant division, broad similarities of women's service existed between these two military contexts.[125] In both nations, women were brought into military service to alleviate manpower pressure. There was an immediate post-war desire by the state to return to "correct" masculine and feminine roles. Women handled their war work well and performed exemplary military service. She concludes that, "the differences between their political regimes were placed in the background, giving way to their patriarchal essence".[126] Politics, even competing nationalisms, are therefore negotiated during a time of crisis such as war. It is within this backdrop that South African war historiography should be read.

### 1.1.4 South Africa's World War II

The intersection of race, class, gender and the military is particularly complex in the South African military context and, according to South African military historian Ian van der Waag, remains contested more than a century after the Union Defence Force was created in 1912.[127] This is, he says, because the South African past is "fractured along ethnicities and

[121] Roger R. Reese, "Soviet Women at War," *Military History*, 2011, p. 46.
[122] Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union". p. 319.
[123] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 324.
[124] Khromeychuk, "Experiences of Women at War", p. 61.
[125] Nataliia Zalietok, "British and Soviet Women in the Military Campaign of 1939-45: A Comparative Review", *MCU Journal*, no. Gender (2018), p. 35.
[126] Zalietok, p. 35.
[127] Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective", p. 1.

nationalisms".[128] It is also fractured along gendered lines. The creation of South African national identity and the development of the South African military are inextricably connected.[129] Yet women, have not always been absent from the literature on women and war.

The Great Trek of the mid-1800s was a protracted period of white migrations away from the Cape Colony by white *trekboers* which led to periods of intense conflict with African groups in what would become the interior of South Africa – particularly the Ndebele and Zulu. Despite the fact that the Great Trek was not a clear-cut state of war, the battles that arose during this migration – and the participation of Voortrekker women therein – did lead to the creation of a lasting ideal of Afrikaner womanhood. This is the image of the *Volksmoeder*.The Afrikaner matrons of the Great Trek were a driving force behind their men. South African historian Herman Giliomee has even described the Voortrekker women as the "driving force behind the trek".[130] In this capacity, it is clear that one of the most common female roles in wartime was fulfilled by the Voortrekker women. They were simultaneously the cheerleaders and the "castrating bitches" urging their men to abandon the domination of the British and to continue on despite "continuous raids of marauding hordes of Bantu".[131] These matrons were "burly, whip-wielding Boer women, who dragged wagons over mountains and knew more about inspanning oxen … than embroidery *anglaise*".[132] It is clear that the Voortrekker women were "no mere adjuncts of their husbands".[133] Rather they wielded considerable influence over their cause and their men. Men would be publically shamed for being perceived as cowardly. In one well-known incident, a woman named Mietjie Kruger cried that if the men were too craven to avenge the killing of her people after a battle, she would fight the Zulu herself.[134] The most famous claimed instance of the redoubtable spirit of the Voortrekker woman can be found in Susanna Smit. Her declaration that she would cross the Drakensbrug Mountains bare-foot to die in liberty before yielding to the British government, that "death is dearer to us than the loss of our freedom",[135] is a clear example of Voortrekker woman filling the mould of the "castrating bitch".

[128] Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective", p. 2.
[129] Van der Waag, p. 2.
[130] Herman Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, (London: C. Hurst & Co.), p. 169.
[131] Gideon Roos, "The Great Trek", *The Australian Quarterly* 22, no. 4, (1950), p. 35.
[132] Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Women and Nationalism in South Africa", *Transition* 51, (1991), p. 109.
[133] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, p. 169.
[134] Robin Binkes, *The Great Trek Uncut* (Pinetown: Helion Limited, 2013), p. 345.
[135] Binkes, *The Great Trek Uncut*, p. 461.

One key difference, however, between the women of the Great Trek and their sisters urging men on in other conflicts, is the proximity that the Voortrekker women had to the fight. Battles were fought when the Voortrekker *laagers* were attacked by "native groups" from the interior. This meant that there was no chance for women and children to escape the conflict. Instead, they often had to pick up arms and fight themselves – thus becoming the "fighting few".

While the Voortrekker men were away scouting for new locations at which to set up camp, the women who were left behind at the *laager* would stand guard.[136] Even when the men were present these women still maintained protective roles, more traditionally associated with the masculine. The men would be stationed outside the *laager* to ward off enemies and, at the same time, the women would cast bullets for the guns with melted lead and during battles they would be positioned to assist in the re-loading of the cumbersome Boer weapons.[137] What this demonstrates is that despite the fact that Voortrekker society was deeply rooted in Calvinistic conventions, where the roles of women were strictly divided and religiously sanctioned, in times of crisis and desperate need women not only fulfilled their necessary feminine duties but were also capable of stepping into more masculine roles.

The histories of these uncompromising Voortrekker matrons opened the doors for the creation of the *Volksmoeder* narrative. The *Volksmoeder* is an idealised womanhood.[138] Those who adhered to this symbolic feminine identity of Arfikanerdom were afforded "some status, honour and respectability" and were depicted as the "cornerstone of the household but also as a central unifying force within Afrikanerdom".[139] Louise Vincent ascribed the following characteristics to the *Volksmoeder*: "a sense of religion, bravery, a love of freedom; the spirit of sacrifice; self-reliance; housewifeliness (*huisvroulikheid*); nurturance of talents; integrity; virtue and the setting of an example to others".[140]

The South African War was a colossal event that brought South Africa women into the arena of warfare on an even larger scale than the Great Trek. The different elements of white South African society at the time had different experiences of how this conflict affected their

[136] J. T. du Bruyn, "Die Groot Trek" in *Nuwe Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, ed. Trewhella Cameron, (Cape Town: Southern Book Publishers, 1991), pp. 127-128.
[137] Roos, "The Great Trek", *The Australian Quarterly*, p. 36.
[138] Elsabe Brink, "Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder*" in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, Cherryl Walker, ed. (Calremont: David Philip, 1990), p. 271.
[139] Brink, p. 271.
[140] Charl Blighnaut, "Doing gender is unavoidable: Women's participation in the core activities of the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1938-1943", *Historia* 58, no .2, (2013), p. 2.

women. For those women allied to the British cause, traditional wartime occupations of providing support and home comforts were key to their experiences of this conflict for the majority. However for the Boer women, their experience was very different, and in many ways more diverse.

The key to understanding the Boer experience of the South African War is to bear in mind that, in a number of ways, they perceived the conflict as a war against their women. This was due to the British imperial army "[terrorising] unarmed people in places occupied by women".[141] One of the greatest manifestations of the supposed British war on Boer women was the concentration camps. Here the "designated non-combatants" of the Boer forces became the direct victims of the war on a mass scale. Due to the internment of Boer women who had been displaced by the razing of farmsteads in the camps and their suffering within them, the Boer women could be seen to have played two crucial traditional feminine wartime roles: firstly, they were the victims of male aggression, and, secondly, they became icons upon which the need to vanquish the enemy was projected.

Although South African historiography (particularly the elements thereof that sympathise with Afrikaner Nationalism) tends to place its focus on painting the Boer women as simply the victims of British cruelty and aggression, the impact of the women concentration camps as symbols for the continuation of the Boer cause is more pertinent. In many respects, Lord Roberts and, later, Lord Kitchener's Scorched Earth policy had the opposite of its intended outcome, which was to demoralise the Boer forces through the destruction of their property and livelihoods. Instead of becoming disheartened by the destruction of their homes and the suffering of their women, the Boers were spurred on by a renewed drive to defeat the British.

Although the British may have unintentionally created a further motivation for the Boer men to fight, the Boer women themselves were a formidable bastion of moral support; so much so that it has been suggested that the "indomitable resistance of the Boer women was the decisive factor in the war".[142] Much like the domineering matrons of the Great Trek, the nationalist Boer women of the South African war encouraged their men to fight and shamed those who did not. It has often been noted that the Boer women were even more bitter against

[141] Bill Nasson, *The War for South Africa*, (Cape Town: NB Publishers, 2010), p. 21.
[142] Herman Giliomee & Bernard Mbenga, *New History of South Africa*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2007), p. 256.

the English than their men.[143] This bitterness redoubled their calls for their men to fight the British forces. Even once dispossessed by the Scorched Earth policy, Boer women "preferred their houses to burn down than to see their husbands surrender".[144]

Again mirroring the experiences of the Voortrekker women, the Boer women of the South African War were not averse to arming themselves and joining the ranks of the "fighting few". The most well-known of these are the so-called "petticoat generals". These were the wives of high ranking Boer soldiers who followed their husbands into the fray out of a sense of duty. Here women like Hester Cronjé and Hendriena Joubert (the wives of Generals Piet Cronjé and Piet Joubert, respectively) acted as bastions of moral support for their husbands and as mascots for the troops.

Granted, despite their tenacity and their undoubted investment into their husbands' military careers, the "petticoat generals" still mostly adhered to the traditional mould of providing encouragement and support; the difference here is that they did so not from a safe distance, but from within the midst of the fray. For the wives of the rank and file Boer soldier who followed their husbands on Commando – as some did – there was no gendered division of safety and as such they were quickly "sucked directly into the arena of the armed struggle".[145] They were forced to pick up weapons to defend themselves. In this position, while they did not wholly overstep the boundaries of their femininity as they did not elect to participate in the violence, on occasion they were forced to. A notable example of this stems from the Battle of Pietershoogte in 1900. A British soldier recounted the following in a letter to his wife at home: "terrifying sight of more than sixteen armed women who were shot dead in the trenches before they had chance to retreat".[146]

What set these women apart from the usual narrative of the "fighting few" is not that they were forced to arm themselves but that they openly fought as women. When women become soldiers they typically must surrender certain markers of femininity; aspects of dress is key amongst these. However, there are a small number of women in the South African War who chose to join the fight willingly. Most notable amongst them is the case of the destitute 25-year-old Helena Herbst Wagner who joined the Johannesburg Commando in search of her

[143] Nasson: *The War for South Africa*, p. 244 & Ludmila Ommundsen: "La guerre Anglo-Boer de 1899 à travers le prisme feminin", *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Instituto italiano per l'Africa* 55, no. 1, (2000), p. 115.
[144] Giliomee: *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, p. 256.
[145] Nasson: *The War for South Africa*, p. 155.
[146] E. M. Meyers: "Die Suid-Afrikaanse vrou in landsverdediging – agtergrond en perspektief", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies*16, no. 2, (1986), p. 34.

missing husband while dressed in his clothing. Although she was ultimately unsuccessful in finding her husband, she did spend three months as a member of the mounted republican forces, participating in the battles of Spioenkop and Pontdrift.[147] Wagner's case is not only remarkable for her role as a member of the "fighting few", but also for her migration out of a female identity. Unlike her combatant sisters, she did not fight as a woman: out of necessity or as a mascot for the (male) troops. Rather, she assumed the dress of a man and became (briefly) a soldier.

What is evident is that during both these conflicts – the Great Trek and The South African War – women were always prominent presences; either as the motivation for the men to fight and win or as active participants themselves. However, despite their constant presence, none of these women participated in the war efforts in any official capacity. This would arise in a later conflict, one which had significance not only for South Africa, but globally.

The impact of World War II on the home front is generally overlooked in the South African historiography. [148] Historian Bill Nasson explains that the comparatively poor state of South African World War II writing is because the War has proved to be "too mixed a narrative to be pressed into national political service".[149] Military historian David Katz furthers this explanation, stating that military histories of World War II have "been trapped in a vortex of nation-building and nostalgia either being used to meet political goals or largely ignored for political reasons thus suffering an arrest in development".[150] This means that the South African historiography of World War II lags behind that of other nations that were involved in the War. Katz points to "the support services, such as the chaplaincy, logistics, women at war, espionage, home defence, politics, demobilisation, medical services and in the economic sphere" as being particular gaps.[151] The members of the WADC, as women at war involved in various auxiliary services that were set up to give support to the male arms of the UDF and who became involved in home defence, are therefore particularly overlooked.

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[147] Meyers: "Die Suid-Afrikaanse vrou in landsverdediging – agtergrond en perspektief", p. 34.
[148] Yolandi Albertyn, "Upsetting the Applecart : Government and Food Control in the Union of South Africa during World War II" (Master's Thesis, Stellenbosch Univeristy, 2014), p.1 & Albert Grundlingh, "The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45", pp. 351-352.
[149] Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 20.
[150] David Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 40, no. 3 (2013), p. 286.
[151] Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", p. 288.

Despite the comparatively limited scope of South Africa's participation in World War II,[152] women played a not insignificant role in the country's war effort from the very beginning, a historically significant moment which marked the first time that the Union's female inhabitants were officially brought into the formal military structure. While brief mentions of South Africa's individual women's auxiliary services do often appear in works on South Africa's World War II generally,[153] these works most often do not go further than a cursory reference that women were in fact present in the nation's war efforts. When the members of the WADC are mentioned in these texts they remain as secondary characters to the men who fought the "real" war. So far, limited attempts investigate the WADC as a whole and works that discuss individual branches but these are limited to that particular corps, are often descriptive and fail to challenge the notion of auxiliary.[154] South Africa has also not experienced the same "herstorical turn" in terms of (re)placing women's histories in the writing of World War II.

The first notable exception is that of L.M. Meyers' 1986 article "Die Suid-Afrikanse vrou in landsverdediging - agtergrond en perspektief", which provides a succinct overview of the history of South African women's participation in wartime, although this is not focused solely on World War II. [155] In a similar vein is Glenda Langman's 1999 Master's thesis, "Can Women Be Accepted in 'Non-Traditional' Roles? A Case Study of White Women in the South African Armed Forces, 1939-1965". As with Meyers' article, this work does not focus solely on women in World War II. She does, however, provide an overview of the wide varitey of work performed by white South African women in the nation's war effort; as factory workers, and as part of SAWAS, WAAS, WAAF, WANS, WAMPC, SAMNS, and auxiliary female police. She also describes women's post-war military work. The thesis examines gender norms and proscriptions placed on women in terms of their military service and concludes that, in the

[152] Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 20.
[153]See: E.M. Meyers, "Die Ontwikkeling van die Vrou as Soldaat," *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 11, no. 2 (1981), pp. 13–20; E.M. Meyers, "Die Suid-Afrikanse Vrou in Landsverdediging - Agtergrond En Parspektief," *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 16, no. 2 (1986), pp. 33–46; Jennifer Crwys-Williams, *A Country at War 1939-1945: Mood of a Nation* (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing, 1992); Bill Nasson, "South Africa," in *The Great World War, 1914-45: Volume 2 The Peoples' Experience*, ed. Peter Liddle, John Bourne, and Ian Whitehead (London: HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 243–256; Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*.
[154]See: C. Bergh, "Die Ontstaan Van Vrouelugverenigings in Suid-Afrika Voor Die Tweede Wereldoorlog", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 9, no. 3 (1979), pp. 24–37; Marjorie Eagerton Bird and Molly Botes, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945", *The South African Military History Society - Military History Journal* 5, no. 5 (1982); Susanna Maria Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog" (Master's thesis, University of Pretoria, 1990).
[155] Meyers, "Die Suid-Afrikanse Vrou in Landsverdediging - Agtergrond En Parspektief", pp. 36-37.

case of South African women during World War II, "traditional gender roles as accepted by society, are broken down during a time of war … The temporary nature of the role women performed justified their presence in the military".[156] While both Meyers' and Langman's works are significant as being among the first to examine these women's participation in the military during World War II in the South African context, the large scope of these investigations prevents a more detailed examination of the women's auxiliary services in terms of their demarcation as non-combatant auxiliaries. They also fail to table the temporary nature of this involvement in their analysis. While the temporary nature of the work made women's participation palatable, this should not be a question about professional and amateur/temporary soldiers but rather an analysis of their role as auxiliary and/or combatant. This too should not be confined by the strict codes created by the gender police of the time – the very protagonists we disagree with in other fields of historical enquiry. This overcoming of the combat taboo of the historiography is already in motion when assessing the new studies on Black participation in the war.

There is an emerging recognition of the need to (re)position black men in the histories of South Africa's wars. This is particularly prominent in World War I writing.[157] As pointed out by Albert Grundlingh, regarding the wartime service of Black men in the UDF during World War I: "In terms of man power, it certainly was a significant contribution – one which received no recognition at the time and has subsequently remained largely ignored in South African historiography".[158] The roles played by South Africa's other group of non-combatant auxiliaries – black men – during World War II have also received scant attention.[159] In the preface to H.R. Gordon-Cumming's *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945),* originally written in the 1960s but only published in 2008, great pains are taken to address the fact that Coloured men are excluded from the narrative due to the "prejudices of that era".[160]

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[156] Glenda Langman, "Can Women Be Accepted in 'Non-Traditional' Roles? A Case Study of White Women in the South African Armed Forces, 1939-1965" (Master's thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1999).
[157] Willan, "The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918" & David Killingray, "Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa 1870-1945", *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (1989), pp. 483–501.
[158] Albert Grundlingh, *War and Society: Participation and Remembrance - South African Black and Coloured Troops in the Frist World War, 1914-1918* (Stellenbosch: SUN Press, 2014), p. 42.
[159] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945" (PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006).
[160] H. R. Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)* (Simon's Town: The Naval Heritage Trust, 2008), p. xiv-xv.

The most significant work that brings attention to both of the UDF's non-combatant auxiliary groups – black men and white women – is that of Suryakanthie Chetty.[161] She has examined the gendered and racial identities and portrayals of white men, black men and white women as three distinct groups within the structures of the UDF. Of particular importance to the current study is Chetty's 2006 PhD thesis entitled "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1930-1945".[162]

Here she offers a more detailed view of uniformed women in World War II, through her focus on the gendered representations of uniformed women in wartime propaganda alongside the differences in representation of black and white men. She argues that World War II marks a turning point in South Africa's history. It opened a window through which a new version of the country could be imagined, one that diverged in its outlook from the strict racial and gender hierarchies of the pre-war years. Chetty argues that:

> representations of women in military uniform and engaging in war work outside the home, was placed uneasily within a domestic and feminine framework … [indicating] a tension between the necessity of having women engage in war work and a similarly strong desire to retain the ideal of women in the home. It suggests also a fear of the possible masculinisation of women working in what was previously a wholly male sphere.[163]

Chetty's thesis provides useful insight into the ways in which uniformed South Africa women were represented by the media (both military and civilian), and how this changed over the course of the War. She shows how the War did succeed in (briefly) altering gendered (and racial) boundaries. As this dissertation will show, the gender boundaries were not necessarily universaly altered but rather varied quite dramatically across the different arms of the WADC.

The use of propaganda and media representations show how women's place in military – in both the WADC and the South African Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS) – was framed in the context of the military's need to maintain social gender roles. While this speaks to Van der Waag's conception of military culture one: the views of women's place and

[161] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Gender Under Fire: Interrogating War in South Africa, 1939-1945" (Master's thesis, University of Natal, 2001); Suryakanthie Chetty, "All the News That's Fit to Print: The Print Media of the Second World War and Its Portrayal of the Gendered and Racial Identities of the War's Participants", *South African Historical Journal* 54, no. 1 (2005), pp. 30–53; Suryakanthie Chetty, "Imagining National Unity : South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War," *Kronos*, no. 38 (2012), pp. 106–30.
[162] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945".
[163] Chetty, p. 27.

participation in the war effort as dictated by the military elite. However, in order to gain a full understanding of the auxiliary roles of white South African women during World War II it is also necessary to investigate the impact of military culture two on the women of the WADC.

While Chetty does note that women were anxious to prove themselves as competent members of the UDF,[164] these women are framed as "the other significant non-combatant, auxiliary group, white women" (alongside black men).[165] A specific distinction between the WADC, as a women's military corps, and SAWAS as a civilian body is not drawn. Nor are the differences between the three branches of the WADC highlighted. Therefore, there is a need to investigate not only WADC as an umbrella women's auxiliary service but also to look at the individual branches and how the divisional military subcultures of the South African army, air force and navy influenced the military identity of the WAAS, WAAF and WANS.

It is clear that the story of South Africa's women auxiliaries of World War II has not yet fully been realised. While the intersection of women's wartime military service and gender norms during World War II has been studied to a degree, no attempt has been made to question the contemporary framing of women's wartime service as nothing more than auxiliary. South Africa's World War II is still seen as a masculine phenomenon. In contrast to the international literature on women's deployment in auxiliary services, there has not been the same effort to re-examine the masculine narrative of World War II in terms of the gendered division of combatant/non-combatant.

As demonstrated by the Zam-Buk advert above, the women of the WADC were a not invisible part of South Africa's war effort. However, their footprint in the historical imagination of South Africa's World War II is absent. This dissertation seeks to address this historical lacuna by investigating how the classification of women as "auxiliary" was determined by racial, class and gender norms – the intersection of race, class, patriarchy, paternalism – within the UDF; how this changed over the course of the War; and, how it varied between and within the WAAS, WAAF and WANS.

[164] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", p. 117.
[165] Chetty, p. 32.

## 1.2 Thesis Questions

The main thesis questions is, how auxiliary were the members of the WADC? It aims to show that over the course of World War II, the three branches of the WADC moved through levels of auxiliary – from most to least – moving closer to overcoming the combat taboo. And, in one notable instant breaking it completely.

From this, the following sub-questions will also be examined: How did the WADC structure evolve from 1939-1945? How did each arm of the WADC evolve over time? What military, political and social factors influenced the ways in which the definition of auxiliary and practices of so-called non-combatants change over time? How were South Africa's women's auxiliary services similar to or different from comparable services in other Allied nations?

## 1.3 Methodology

As this is first and foremost an investigation into the deployment of service(wo)men, the records of the South African National Defence Force Archives formed the bedrock for this study. Of particular importance was the Women's Auxiliary Defence Force (WADC) collection. This contains a wide variety of documentation concerning the WADC and its component branches; particularly the WAAS and the WAAF. The Union War Histories (UWH) collection also proved fruitful as it contains accounts relating to the history of SAWAS, the first WAAS draft to be sent "Up North" and the creation of the WAAF (amongst a number of other topics). It also provided a wealth of contemporary newspaper clippings related to the South African women's auxiliary services. This allowed for introspection on the changing media representations of women in the auxiliaires. The J.C. Smuts collection housed in the National Archives, Pretoria, also proved useful.

However, the national lockdown, implemented to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, prevented access to other repositories and collections that could have proved useful. As discussed below, this had the greatest impact on researching the WANS. More generally, having access to a wider source base – including, for example, the Adjutant-General's records, Secretary for Defence and Chief of the General Staff collections at the South African National

Defence Force Archives – could have provided a deeper understanding of the attitudes of male "top brass" to servicewomen and explained the nature of the tensions that arose in the UDF command when women were given command posts.

A second voice – outside of official wartime records – was gained from the *Nongqai*, the official news magazine of the South African Forces. While this was a magazine written by men for men, the men in question were *service*men, not civilians. The *Nongqai*, therefore, not only provided more detail about the deployment of women auxiliaries at Army and Air Force detachments throughout the Union but it also gave a good indication of how military women were perceived by military men. Importantly, there is a distinct shift in these views as the war progressed.

However, as a servicemen's magazine, the *Nongqai* was written by and for a specific audience. This means that, depite its value as a lens into the views of servicemen, the magazine is limited to the views of service*men*; meaning that service*women*'s points of view are lacking (both in regards to their own military service and to their perception of their brothers in arms). Additionally, as the "Official Newsmagazine of the South African Forces", the *Nongqai* also served as a mouthpiece for the branches of the UDF, the Police and the Prisons Services. This means that the views included in this magazine are often limited by the message that the forces needed to put forward. In other words – in the context of a military struggling to build its ranks at the outbreak of the War,[166] and particularly during the 1942 recruitment crisis – the *Nongqai* was unlikely to publish material that would shed a negative light on South Africa's servicemen.

One area where locating primary source material proved challenging was the WANS. Unfortunately, documentation on this branch of the WADC was scarce in the WADC and UWH collections. It is likely that much of the information concerning the WANS is housed with documents relating to SANF. Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa, I was not able to locate or access these. There are also almost no mentions of the WANS, or the SANF, in the *Nongqai*. Therefore, for the Swans a different approach had to be taken.

*Sailor-women, Sea-women, Swans* by Margaret P.H. Laver is the only text of this kind written about the WANS. While it is a commemorative text – in the same vein as the multitude written about the WRNS – it is an invaluable source. Laver, a former Swan, divides the book

[166] Bill Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012), p. 41 & Ian Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015), p. 135.

into two sections: "History" and "Reminiscences". In the former, she draws heavily on a number of sources to comprehensively tell the story of the formation, training, work and daily routines of the Swans. The latter is made up of the personal recollections of more than 40 Swans. Although these were written decades after the closing of the WADC, these reminiscences provide an insight into the thoughts and feelings of these servicewomen; something that is not as readily available for the WAAS or WAAF. It should be noted that where possible, memoirs and autobiographies from women involved in these arms are also read and integrated into the dissertation to provide personal recollections of the lived experiences of these women. In reading these recollections as a form of oral history by proxy, important glimpses were unearthed into how the military service of these women was shaped by the social, cultural and interpersonal forces of the time.[167] These reminiscences provide micronarratives of the War and women's military service within the UDF and serve to overcome the confines of using a colonially constructed archive.

Despite the value of these micronaratives as a source for women's own perceptions of their military service, the use of memoirs as an historical source is not without its pitfalls. The distance of 40 years between the events described and the moment when the accounts were penned gives the writer time to mediate the immediacy of their lived experience and, in so doing, creates a space where these experiences can be ordered. A potential danger of this ordering is that "by transforming the complexity of lived experience to a coherent narrative the contradictions, ambiguities, intricacies are subordinated to demand of the story".[168] More simply, this means that the Swans had time to decide what story they wanted to tell about their time in the WANS. However, this weakness can be mitigated through scrutiny. In the same way that oral interviews can be cross-examined, the accuracy of memory can also be cross-referenced (as far as possible) with other genres of sources.[169]

A second aspect of *Sailor-women, Sea-women, Swans* that bares inspection is Laver's "History" section. While this gives a succinct overview of the creation growth and work of the WANS, this is not academically grounded. As a commemorative text, the narrative that is put forward is generally a positive one. Much like the *Nongqai*, *Sailor-women, Sea-women, Swans*

[167] Louise W. Knight, "Sibling Rivalry: History and Memoir", *The Women's Review of Books* 24, no. 4 (2007), p. 13 & Julie Stephens, "Our Remembered Selves: Oral History and Feminist Memory," *Oral History* 38, no. 1 (2010), p. 82.
[168] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006), pp. 19-20.
[169] David J Mitchell, "'Living Documents': Oral History and Biography," *Biography* 3, no. 4 (1980), p. 286.

was written by and for a specific audience. In this case former Swans and their loved ones. As such it aims to commemorate the service rather than scrutinise the intricacies of its existence.

Despite the pitfalls of relying on memoir and commemorative texts, *Sailor-women, Sea-women, Swans* proved a valuable source of information for the Swans chapter. However, the lack of access to primary, archival documentation due to the Covid-19 lockdown meant that certain questions regarding the debates and difficulties that surrounded the creation of the WANS could not be fully answered. Nor could a deeper understanding of *why* the Swans appeared to be so different to their sisters-in-arms be fully uncovered.

The focus of this study is the status of women as auxiliaries in the UDF during World War II. Although it was the fourth branch of the WADC, the WAMPS is only briefly mentioned in Section 2.3.1 "Occurrences of an undesirable nature": The WAMPC. This is because the Military Police on home soil functioned as a law enforcement organisation – enforcing military law rather than civilian – rather than as a combatant force. Thus further examination would prove futile to the aim of this study. The South African Military Nursing Service (SAMNS) is also neglected. Established in August 1914, during World War II, the SAMNS numbered 3 710 women.[170] This meant that the SAMNS was a more established female body within the structures of the UDF than the WADC. In addition to this, as nurses, the members of the SAMNS fell in to the archetype of the caring Florence Nightingale nurse. Their status as women in the military environment did not threaten the gendered barriers of military masculinity and civilian femininity in the same way that including women in the milieus of the army, air force and navy did.

This study does not seek to place the history of white female military auxiliaries above the efforts of other women during World War II. Instead it seeks to address one manageable gap surrounding women's participation in the South African war effort, based primarily on the availability of primary sources.

Unfortunately, the bulk of the female South African population is sadly neglected from the research. It must be acknowledged that the majority black South African population was excluded not only from processes but also from full participation in the military, leading to their voices and experiences often being omitted from the South African historiography of

[170] Meyers, "Die Suid-Afrikanse Vrou in Landsverdediging - Agtergrond En Parspektief", p. 35. & SADF Archives, "SA Forces in the Second World War," *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 19, no. 3 (1989), p. 47.

World War II.[171] While black, Indian and coloured men were enlisted as auxiliaries in the Non-European Army Services (NEAS), the prevailing political and social reality of the time meant that only white women were members of the WADC. Although there was some deliberation to attest coloured women into the WADC during the recruitment crisis, this never came to pass. A small number of coloured and Indian women were involved on the fringes of *civilian* auxiliary organisations, like SAWAS, but their contributions were limited and access to sources on their involvement, proved even more challenging. Again, their inclusion would not necessarily have proven useful to the focus of this study. Moreover, no African women were recruited in either civilian or military women's auxiliary services.

To conclude, two important notes need to be made on terminology and referencing. Firstly, racial terms have been maintained throughout this dissertation because of the implications this terminology had on the organisation of the militray structure. Secondly, the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS 17the edition) has been applied and as such, the *Ibid* referencing style has been adapted in accordance with prescribed referencing techniques.

## 1.4 Dissertation Outline

This thesis is divided into six chapters. This chapter has provided an introduction to the study. The chapter has outlined the scope and focus of the study as well as examined studies of gender and war, women's participation in women's auxiliary services internationally and in South Africa. Chapter Two investigates the creation of the WADC as an umbrella organisation of women's auxiliary service attached to the UDF. It focuses on the reasons behind the creation of the WADC and the gendered, racial and military issues that helped shape the construction of women's military service alongside the UDF. The chapter also discusses the markers of military belonging – recruitment, rank and uniform, discipline – and how these created a military sub-culture belonging to the WADC. It demonstrates how South Africa's servicewomen were brought into or excluded from the prevailing military culture of the UDF and how the women themselves adopted and adapted to military culture in terms of their self-identification.

[171] Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", p. 283.

Chapters Three, Four and Five focus on each of the branches of the WADC in turn. The organisational structure, military identity, training and deployment of the WAAS, WAAF and WANS are investigated separately. These three chapters show how each branch of the WADC evolved over the course of the War, and how each branch created their own military sub-culture in relation to the male arm of service to which they were attached. More importantly these three chapters demonstrate how military, political and social factors caused the definition of auxiliary within each branch to shift. These chapters argue that the status of South Africa's servicewomen as auxiliaries and as non-combatants was not static, nor was it framed in the same way in each branch. The final chapter, Chapter Six, concludes the study.

# Chapter 2: A Uniform Military Culture and the Establishment of the Uniformed Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 1939-1945

At the outbreak of the War, the UDF was in a "poor military condition".[1] As noted by historian Bill Nasson: "on the eve of war in September 1939, the condition of the UDF […] was abysmal"; so much so that "a new army, air force and navy would have to be formed virtually from scratch".[2] According to military historian Ian van der Waag, this was due to a combination of poor peacetime planning and preparation, and a military leadership that had been negatively affected by little training and no real experience during the inter-war years.[3] This was compounded by internal social and political tensions regarding South Africa's role in the war.

South Africa was, in many ways, a deeply divided nation. The population was split between English-speakers and Afrikaners; between white and black; and between those who supported South Africa joining the Allied war effort, and those against (although some remained indifferent). Tensions were rife, and South Africa was in a fraught situation. This meant that the nation suffered a shortage of military manpower. Or, as Nasson succinctly summarises, due to these difficulties "only a tiny fraction of South Africa's people *fought* the war or assisted in prosecuting its national war effort".[4] The dire state of the South African military meant that able and willing *man*power had to be mustered from wherever possible.

To this end, the South African government began to marshal the strength of its women for the non-combatant war effort in 1939. Initially made up of the Women's Auxiliary Army Service (WAAS) and the Women's Auxiliary Airforce (WAAF) – with the later addition of the Women's Auxiliary Naval Service (WANS) – the Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps (WADC) would become an umbrella organisation of full-time servicewomen. According to the excited reporting from *The Rand Daily Mail* on the mobilisation of South Africa's first women volunteers, the service was founded due to the "insistent demand by South African Women

[1] Ian Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015), p. 135.
[2] Bill Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012), p. 41.
[3] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p. 135.
[4] Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 19.

since the outbreak of the war that they should be allowed to play some part in assisting the country in its war effort".[5]

Through their insistence and the ever-increasing manpower shortage experienced by the UDF, South African women were indeed allowed to play "some part" in the Union's war effort. The members of the WADC were to be servicewomen and not simply girls in uniform. However, due to the ideological need to maintain prevailing gender norms, they were kept safely within the realm of non-combatant, auxiliary war work. The proverbial "protected" would enter the realm of the "protector" under strict conditions which would dictate length of "honorary status", rules of engagement and chains of command.[6] The umbrella organisation of the WADC, would ensure conformity to the ideals of the UDF but would also have to negotiate cultural differences that existed between the divisional structures of the army, air force and the navy.

This chapter investigates the place of the WADC within the larger structure of the UDF.[7] In order to understand how and why these South African servicewomen were framed as "auxiliary", it is necessary to discuss how South Africa's specific social mores of race, class and gender influenced women's military service and belonging. This will be done by firstly examining the creation of the WADC as an umbrella for the women's auxiliary services and discussing its organisational structure in relation to other allied women's auxiliary services. Secondly, the recruitment of women and the propaganda campaign will be investigated. The creation of a uniform military identity within the WADC will be discussed in terms of rank and uniform to demonstrate how the WADC was established as a military body to instil sanctioned standards of military discipline and behaviour. Finally, the inequalities between South African servicemen and -women in terms of the military definition of citizenship and pay rates will be discussed.

This chapter argues that despite these efforts at establishing a collective women's auxiliary identity framed within the context of the broader UDF collective identity, the particularity of the divisional differences within the context of South Africa provided opportunities for the South African WADC to stand apart from similar sister-organisations

[5] South African National Defence Force Archives (SANDFA), Pretoria, Union War Histories (UWH), Civil Section, Box 261, 62 Women's Volunteer Detachment; Newspaper cutting: 'SA Detachment of Women Mobilised', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29/6/40.
[6] For a discussion on the role of "protector" and "protected" refer to: Elshtain, *Women and War*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
[7] This complex system and the positioning of the WADC, WAAS, WAAF and WANS within the broader defence structure is depicted in Appendix B.

abroad. Furthermore, this provided an opportunity for some auxiliary arms to adapt the rules of warfare allowing some to become less auxiliary than others. This necessitates a critical investigation of each of the three arms of the WAAS, WAAF and WANS, which unfolds in subsequent chapters.

## 2.1 Women at War: The Creation of the WADC as a Women's Corps parallel to the UDF in 1940

In order to understand the place of the WADC as a women's corps in the UDF, it is necessary to discuss how and why the WADC was created as an umbrella corps for the three South African women's auxiliary services. In so doing it will show the placement of the WADC as a women's service within the masculine UDF. This will be done by first discussing why women's wartime service during World War II (both internationally and in South Africa) was framed as auxiliary. Secondly, the organisational structure of WADC as a female arm of the UDF will be outlined. Finally, the entry requirements for the Corps will be discussed to give an indication of what sort of woman the WADC wanted in its ranks, and how this changed as War progressed.

### 2.1.1 "They are by force of circumstances supplementary to men": The Framing of Women's Wartime Service as Auxiliary

The shortage of manpower that the Union's military suffered at the beginning of the conflict compounded the need for women to take over non-combatant roles. This was not unique to South Africa. In other Allied nations – such as Great Britain, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada – women were drawn into a range of women's auxiliary corps to "[plug] gaps left by absent men".[8] The integration of women into auxiliary war work was a frequent reason for bringing women into the military, especially during World War II.[9] This was possible, argues historian M. Michaela Hampf, because technological advances had shifted emphasis in the military's occupational structure from combat to administrative and

[8] Virginia Nicholson, *Millions like Us: Women's Lives during the Second World War* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 86.
[9] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945" (PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006), p. 71.

technical work. This meant that women who had the necessary skills could be employed in administrative or technical posts by the military "without changing the organization's [*sic*.] stratified structure".[10]

The fears of upsetting military structure through the integration of women into the military and the subsequent limitation of women's military roles to auxiliary (rather than combatant) positions, are closely linked to prevailing gender norms. According to American scholar D'Ann Campbell:

> Putting these women soldiers into combat constituted a radical inversion of the traditional roles of women as the passive sweetheart/wife/sex object whose ultimate mission was to wait for their virile menfolk to return from their masculine mission of fighting and dying for "apple pie and motherhood".[11]

In other words, the patriarchal social structure had to be preserved. Military historian Ian van der Waag has made the observation that the military is a microcosm of society.[12] Elevating women into the role of a combatant would rattle the entrenched mantra of the conservatives: "men are seen as the only gender that should be placed in risky situations, and this emerges from the belief that women are the weaker sex while men are considered strong and brave".[13] The idea that female combatants would represent a social deviancy from accepted gender norms has been eloquently coined the "combat taboo".[14]

In Britain, members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) were "literally auxiliaries, recruited to all-women organisations designed to support the male military 'in the back room' and 'behind the lines'".[15] These women were never integrated into the ranks of the army, air force or navy in an attempt to preserve their separate, auxiliary position within the military

[10] M. Michaela Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", *Women's Studies International Forum* 27, no. 1 (2004), p. 15.
[11] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1993), p. 302.
[12] Ian van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African armed forces, an historical perspective", paper presented at the Second South African Conference on Strategic Theory, "On Strategy; Military culture and African armed forces", co-hosted by Stellenbosch University and the Royal Danish Defence College, 22-23 September 2011, p. 2.
[13] Nyameka Mankayi, "Male Constructions and Resistance To Women in the Military", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011), p. 47.
[14] This will be explained later in this chapter.
[15] Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 9, no. 2 (2000), p. 232.

structures. Never receiving the acknowledgement they rightly deserved, they were indeed vital to the war effort.

American resistance to women in the military was most actively championed by conservative religious groups. Their argument was this would subvert the "natural order" of household relationships.[16] When the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was created in May 1942,[17] it was to be a strictly "separate, supplementary, parallel adjunct of the military establishment".[18] Fears of male "humiliation" abounded.[19] However, by July 1943, the term "auxiliary" was dropped when the Women's Army Corps (WAC) was given full military status. This meant that WAC rank and regulations were brought in line with those of the US Army, rather than the women following their own parallel system. However, they continued to be deployed in non-combatant, auxiliary roles. The only significant difference was that the WACs were allowed to serve overseas. Therefore, a change in name did little to change the combatant/auxiliary status of these women.

In the Union of South Africa, similar fears of social disruption were rife. At the time it was argued that "Women cannot wholly replace men. They are by force of circumstances supplementary to men. This principle applies particularly in the military forces […] If this principle is departed from it will completely upset our military and social structure".[20] For this reason, the women who were enlisted into the South African military sphere had to be kept separate and secondary to the main forces. This does not mean that in every case they were, nor least that they saw themselves as, such.

While the military microcosm reflects the norms of civilian society, it is also affected by social change.[21] The acceptability of women's place in the military is rooted in their non-combatant, auxiliary status. This gendered containment of their role simultaneously preserves women's peacetime status as civilians and allows them to transend this as members of the masculine military. The tension between social change and inertia can be understood in terms of Margaret Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet's metaphor of the Double Heliwhich explains how

[16] Yashila Permeswaran, "Women's Army Auxiliary Corps: A Compromise to Overcome the Conflict of Women Serving in the Army", *The History Teacher* 42, no. 1 (2008), pp. 96-97.
[17] Jennifer Nichol Stewart, "Wacky Times: An Analysis of the WAC in World War II and Its Effects on Women", *Inernational Social Science Review* 75, no. 1 (2000), p. 29.
[18] Permeswaran, "The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps: A Compromise to Overcome the Conflict of Women Serving in the Army", p. 97.
[19] Permeswaran, p. 97.
[20] SANDFA, Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps (WADC), Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.
[21] Patricia M. Shields, "Dynamic Intersection of Military and Society", in *Handbook of Military Sciences*, ed. A. Sookermany, 2020, p. 1.

the world wars affected the "persistant system of gender relationships".[22] In peacetime, the female strand of the double helix is opposed and subordinate to the male strand. In wartime, manpower demands force more women into male roles (both military and civilian). This is acceptable in terms of gendered social norms because, as Higonnet and Higonnet explain, "in this social dance, the woman appears to have taken a step forward as the partners change places – but he is in fact still leading her".[23] In the context of pre-apartheid South Africa, a second demension is added. The changing roles of white South African women in civilian society would more easily allow for their inclusion rather than that of women of colour and black men because the South African Double Helix allowed flexibility of gender containment but not race.

The combat taboo was therefore a widespread concept shared by those Allied nations – like Britain and the US – where women were drawn into auxiliary corps, preventing women's full (combatant) participation in military service during the war. However, in the specific South African context, the combat taboo takes on another dimension. In the words of social historians Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, at the time of World War II, "the identity of the defender of the nation was profoundly masculine".[24] In South Africa at the outbreak of World War II, the "defender of the nation" was not only profoundly masculine, but also profoundly white. What this meant is that membership to the UDF as combatants or defenders of the nation was restricted to white men. Those who became part of the military but who were neither white nor male could, at most, become auxiliaries to the white, male defenders of the nation. As such black, coloured and Indian men who were drawn into the Defence Force during the war could only undertake strictly non-combatant positions.[25] Equally, women's place in the UDF had to be limited to auxiliary positions. Neither group – Black men or white women – could become combatant members of the UDF as they did not fulfil the requirements for a South African soldier; being neither white nor male. The inclusion of women of colour into the armed forces was even more restrictive.[26] The nature of their roles had to be contained by their race and gender.

Black men were first drawn into the South African military milieu as auxiliaries during World War I through the South African Native Labour Contingent. Their roles were strictly

[22] Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 34.
[23] Higonnet and Higonnet, p. 35.
[24] Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, "Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War", p. 234.
[25] T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa - A Modern History* (South Africa: Macmillan, 1987), p. 330.
[26] Discussed in greater detail in Section 2.2

limited to non-combatant auxiliary jobs. In the words of historian Brian P. Willan: "From the outset, there was no question of these black South African labourers being engaged in any combatant capacity".[27] As with white women's integration into the UDF in World War II, many of the fears surrounding the participation of black men in the South African military were linked to a breakdown, not of the gendered order, but the existing racial hierarchy and social order.[28] When black men were enlisted into the UDF during World War II, they were once again kept in separate and segregated corps.

The combat taboo in South Africa was therefore not only gendered but also racialized. It is within this context that the WADC was established to cater for white women, who in comparison to the other racial groups, had at least achieved universal suffrage by 1930. The story of the WADC is therefore one of a gendered struggle set apart from similar stories on women's auxiliaries because white women in South Africa were confined by their gender but afforded some level of privilege over non-white races and even more privilege over women of colour who were subjected to both gender and racial discrimination.

### 2.1.2 The Umbrella Corps: The Organisational Structure of the WADC within the UDF

The UDF was created through the South African Defence Act of 1912.[29] It was an amalgam of "four disparate forces, representing at least three military traditions, and speaking and protecting two languages".[30] With the 1922 amendment of the South African Defence Act, the forces that made up the UDF were brought together under a single headquarters staff.[31] The armed forces that made up the UDF during World War II were the army or land forces, the South African Air Force (SAAF) and the South African Naval Forces (SANF).[32]

The manpower of the UDF was further divided between the Permanent Force (PF) and the Active Citizen Force (ACF). The PF was made up of career soldiers. The ACF were volunteer reservists to be mobilised during times of crisis, according to the 1912 Defence Act. The UDF's manpower during World War II was restricted to using volunteers as part of the Smuts government's efforts to quell unrest in a population deeply divided by South Africa's

[27] B.P. Willan, "The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918", *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 1 (1978), p. 63 .
[28] Willan, p. 63.
[29] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p. 151.
[30] Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective," p. 6.
[31] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p. 151.
[32] The creation of this arm of service in 1942 is discussed in Chapter 5.

entrance into the War.[33] Servicemen in the ACF volunteered to serve in the South African armed forces "for the duration of the war".[34]

In addition to the three combatant branches, the UDF during World War II also had two non-combatant auxiliary branches. The Directorate of Non-European Army Services (NEAS) was created in July 1940 as the umbrella organisation for non-white units. It was made up of the Cape Corps (CC), the Indian and Malay Corps (IMC) and the Native Military Corps (NMC).[35] 79 258 black men served in the NMC and a total of 46 412 coloured and Indian men in the CC and IMC.[36] Keeping these men segregated from white combatant soldiers preserved the profoundly white and male nature of South Africa's defenders of the nation.[37] Although there was a brief suggestion to bring coloured women into military service in December 1942, the combination of their race and gender precluded their integration into the military sphere in any officially sanctioned capacity. Black women were completely excluded.[38]

The Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps was created under the regulations of Proclamation No. 287 of 1939 and further validated by section two of the War Measures Act (Act No. 13 of 1940).[39] The War Measures Act endorsed emergency proclamations and validated internal security arrangements deemed necessary for the war.[40] According to the wording of this act, the function of the Corps was simply to aid the UDF by carrying out various non-combatant duties.[41] As such, the main aim in creating the WADC was for these women to take over a number of "administrative and semi-technical duties"[42] – these were mostly clerical

[33] Bill Nasson, "South Africa", in *The Great World War, 1914-45: Volume 2 The Peoples' Experience*, ed. Peter Liddle, John Bourne, and Ian Whitehead (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 246; A.M. Fokkens, "Afrikaner Unrest Within South Africa During the Second World War and the Measures Taken to Suppress It," *Journal for Contemporary History* 37, no. 2 (2012), p. 133; Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 92; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p. 175. These tensions are discussed in further detail in Section 2.2.
[34] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p. 185.
[35] Van der Waag, p. 175.
[36] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p. 176.
[37] Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, "Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War", p. 234.
[38] The debates surrounding the possible attestation of coloured women and the exclusion of black women is discussed in more detail below.
[39] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[40] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*. p. 175
[41] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941. These non-combatant duties varied between the WAAS, WAAF and WANS, and developed as the War went on. The specific duties undertaken by each branch of the WADC will be discussed in the chapters relating to each individual branch.
[42] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, Memorandum: Historical Background to the Women's Defence Corps of the SA Defence Force, n.d. The significance of these duties being described as *semi*-technical is made apparent in Chapter 5.

and secretarial posts – so as to free white men for combat. These "T&A" (or Technical and Administrative) members would form the bulk of the WADC's personnel throughout the war.[43]

The WADC consisted of four branches. The WAAS and WAAF were the first to be established with the first members beginning their service in 1940. Both of these branches of the WADC grew out of civilian volunteer organisations: the South African Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS) and the South African Women's Aviation Association (SAWAA), respectively. Even though SAWAS was administrated by the Department of Defence and its members wore their own uniforms, they were never members of the UDF. It remained a civilian, volunteer organisation. It was from these two organisations that the first recruits for the WADC were drawn. When the WAAS and WAAF were founded as military organisations, their civilian originators did not fall away. Rather the SAWAS and Women's Voluntary Air Force (WVAF, as the SAWAA were recreated after the establishment of the WAAF[44]) became responsible for recruitment for their military sisters. In June 1942 another leg was added to the WADC: the Women's Auxiliary Military Police Corps (WAMPC). The final branch of the WADC was founded in 1943: the Women's Auxiliary Naval Service (WANS). Unlike the WAAS and WAAF, the WANS had no peacetime, civilian counterpart. Each branch of the WADC worked as auxiliaries to their corresponding male branch of the UDF.

Despite the large cohort of individual branches of international women's auxiliary services, it appears as though South Africa was alone in creating an umbrella under which its women's services fell. No other allied nation seems to have had a comparable umbrella organisation that brought all of its women's auxiliaries under one administrative body. Britain, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia all had women's auxiliary services attached to their nations' armies, air forces and navies. These auxiliary services functioned as separate services attached to their respective male arms of service. In India, for example, the Women's Auxiliary Corps (India), or WAC(I), served as an auxiliary body to both the British Indian Army and the Indian Air Force.[45] But this remained one auxiliary body which served two arms of the male service. As such, no divisional distinctions can be observed.

The peculiarity of the WADC as an umbrella organisation resembled its male counterpart, the UDF. By keeping the women's services separate and under the control of the

[43] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, Memorandum: Historical Background to the Women's Defence Corps of the SA Defence Force, n.d.
[44] This is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
[45] Alan Harfield, "The Women's Auxiliary Corps (India)", *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 83, no. 335 (2005), pp. 243–54.

WADC – rather than under the male branches of the armed services that they served (as was usually the case overseas) – gender distinctions could be maintained. By containing the women's services under the supervision of the WADC rather than directly under the UDF, it was further reiterated that they were a separate part of the South African military; related to the male services but not a part of them. A similar observation can be made about the establishment of the NEAS as a separate entity to the white part of the UDF.

Racial dogma, gender norms and combat taboos meant that women's wartime service had to be carefully located within the auxiliary sphere. They could not become soldiers but were "safe" as auxiliaries doing non-combatant jobs. Civilian social mores were thus mirrored in the microcosm of the military.

The creation of the WADC was not the first time that women had been employed by the UDF. Before the outbreak of war and in the early days of the War, many civilian women had been employed by the South African military in similar administrative jobs – particularly as typists.[46] The longstanding presence of civilian women around the offices of the UDF may have gone some way towards easing the integration of women into the military itself. What further aided with the integration of these women into the daily running of the UDF is that the WADC were, first and foremost, members of a military service despite their status as auxiliaries.

Because the Women's Corps was formed through the War Measures Act of 1940, the WADC was subject to the South African Defence Act of 1912. This meant that members of the WADC were members of a military service; they were given official uniforms and military ranks and were expected to abide by the rules and regulations of the UDF linked to the Military Discipline Code (MDC).[47] Although they were expected to abide by the MDC, all matters of discipline were handled internally by the WADC until the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Military Police Corps in April 1942. What this entailed, as outlined in annotations to the first draft of the WADC regulations by Lieutenant Colonel (Mrs) Doreen Dunning (one of the founding members of the WAAF who helped to draft the official regulations for the WADC), was as follows:

> To observe the rules, orders, and instructions laid down […] for

[46] SANDFA, "Defence Headquarters by the Official Correspondent" in *Nongqai*, October 1940, Vol. XXXI, No. 10. p. 1159.
[47] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, n.d. The impact of this on the WADC is discussed in Section 2.3.1.

> the Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps or its component units;
> To obey all orders given by their superiors […];
> To perform any work which may be required of them by their superiors;
> To give full-time general service in the existing national emergency when called upon to do so, and to serve anywhere in Africa, unless specifically provided for.[48]

This resembled the liabilities for service outlined for male members of the UDF, including the possibility of being brought into a wider war through taking the "Red Tab Oath" – signalling willingness to serve outside the Union. Unlike civilian women who worked at Headquarters – for example the volunteers of SAWAS – the women of the WADC were enlisted as members of the South African defence forces, although their exact roles and integration therein changed as the war progressed.

### 2.1.3 Fitting the Bill: Recruitment Standards in the WADC

The initial recruitment standards for service in the WADC were surprisingly relaxed. Those who wished to attest for service with the WADC – or any of its component units – simply had to be a "South African National of European descent or a British subject of European descent",[49] between the ages of 19 and 41, "who was physically fit".[50] By the end of 1941, the minimum entry requirements resembled those of the UDF.

White women from the South West Africa – which had been administrated as a protectorate of South Africa since 1920, becoming a *de facto* fifth province of the Union[51] – could also join the WADC. So too could white women from Britain's African colonies as they were British subjects. For example, six Swans came from Northern and Southern Rhodesia and one from Kenya.[52]

In May 1942, American citizens could volunteer for either the UDF or the WADC provided they took a modified version of the oath of attestation. There is, however, no evidence

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[48] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, n.d.
[49] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[50] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[51] Davenport, *South Africa - A Modern History*, p. 481.
[52] Margaret P. H. Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), p. 7.

(that I have found) to show that any American woman did join the branches of the WADC. This is not to suggest that no foreign women joined the WADC. L/Swan (Miss) Suzy Keyzer was a Belgian national who joined the WANS in September 1945.[53] As an "alien" it was not easy for Keyser to join the WADC.[54] However, provision had been made in the regulations in 1943 that the Adjutant-General could "authorise the acceptance of candidates not fulfilling the conditions as to nationality and age".[55] To aid her case, a WAAS officer who was a friend of Keyser's family wrote a letter of recommendation guaranteeing that Keyser's family was "helping in the war effort".[56] Allegiance and willingness to serve the Union were determining factors in allowing foreign women to join the WADC and clearly exceptions to the rule occurred under the right circumstances. This suggests that even in a presumably regimented military structure such as the UDF, exceptions and adaptations were possible.

It has proven impossible to determine the language preferences of the members of the WADC. As historian John Lambert clarifies, with regards to the UDF, "there are no statistics on language groups and information is based on perceptions".[57] The application for enlistment forms for both the UDF and WADC did not record language because, as pointed out by historian Albert Grundlingh, "the government wished to present the force as a united front where differences between Afrikaans- and English-speakers had no place".[58] Predictions based on surnames would also prove highly unreliable.[59] However, director of military intelligence during World War II, E.G. Malherbe, estimated that English- and Afrikaans-speakers were evenly represented in the UDF; and this has served as a benchmark.[60]

There is no indication the WADC was vastly different, however, in the early stages of the Corps' development, there seems to have been a slightly higher English membership than Afrikaans. The first members of the WAAS, for example, were drawn from SAWAS which was a predominantly English organisation.[61] As the service grew, new recruits joined from outside SAWAS. The WANS is the only branch of the WADC where any clear indication of

[53] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 287.
[54] Laver, p. 287.
[55] Laver, p. 7.
[56] Laver, p. 287.
[57] John Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 1 (2008), p. 67.
[58] Albert Grundlingh, "The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45", *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 3 (1999), p. 354.
[59] Grundlingh, p. 354.
[60] Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", p. 67; Grundlingh, "The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45", p. 354.
[61] The creation and character of SAWAS is discussed in Chapter 3.

preferred language has been established. Only one Swan – L/Swan (Miss) Marie van Rooyen – identified Afrikaans as her first language; the rest were English-speaking.[62]

The first members of the WADC were described, in the history of the WAAS Welfare and Information Services, as "people of some means and good educational standards whose primary motive in attesting was to serve the country in a time of crisis".[63] As a narrative produced for the Union War Histories Section, this was an official history and quite possibly served as a propaganda tool to entice the "right sort of person" into the WADC. However, some corroborating testimonies from outside of the war archives allow for certain observations to be made.

The Corps seems to have been made up of mostly middle-class white women. This is most obviously illustrated in the recollections of P/O (Miss) Lucy Ellis, a Swan who served on Robben Island. During her basic training, she recalls that many of the volunteers came from "comfortable and even affluent homes, in which few of [them] had had to fetch and carry for [them]selves".[64] This sits in stark contrast to the social narratives in circulation at the time about women as caregivers, wives and mothers. This also suggests that during the Disciplinary Course, some of the fledgling Swans learned other life skills, such as scrubbing floors, cleaning windows and doing their own laundry,[65] almost in preparation for the life they were expected to return to after the war. Learning how to correctly perform these apparently mundane activities was supposedly a strategy for instilling discipline, and would be part of the Springdoes' lives when on service.[66] In addition, recruits had to live near railway stations, and be able to pay for their own uniforms, petrol and food. Training therefore instilled certain desirable traits but access to the WADC, at least in the initial phase of recruitment, was restricted to those who could afford to cover the costs of "doing one's bit for the war effort".

According to the general rules for recruiting at the end of 1941, "Ordinary enlistments" included any (white) women between the ages of 18 and 41. Here no special authority was

[62] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 342.
[63] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[64] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 226.
[65] Laver, p. 226.
[66] No official explanation of the origin of the word Sprindoes is given. It is a feminisation of "Springbok" – commonly used to refer to male South African troops. It is either a *portmanteau* of Springbok and the Afrikaans word "*doedie*" which refers to a young girl. Or Spring-doe, the female of a Spring-buck. Interestingly, a similar reference is made for the women who joined the South African Army Women's College. The women who attended the college were nicknamed *Soldoedies* (young girl soldiers). The college was the first institution in the country set up specifically to train women to take over non-combatant military jobs during the Border War period (1966-1990).

needed to enlist these volunteers "provided the usual recruitment procedure [was] observed" when the women filled in the application for enlistment forms.[67] However, this age bracket was not fixed. Provisions were made for older women (between 41 and 51 years old) to join the Corps as "special enlistments" if they were "required for service by reason of the possession of special technical or other qualification",[68] and if they were pronounced "fit" by the medical board. In very exceptional cases this age range was extended to 55 years old. The age limits for women mirrored those for men in the UDF. As the UDF age limit for male service in the Permanent Force anywhere in Africa was 45 years of age, these "special enlistments" (whether male or female) would only serve within the Union.[69] For male members of the Active Citizen Force, the age bracket was set between 17 and 45 years of age, while special reserve battalions were set up for men up to 60-years-old.[70]

The lower age limit was also flexible, although not to the same degree. Volunteers could "in no circumstances" be recruited if they were "still subject to the compulsory schooling laws operating in their Provinces of domicile" unless they had already been exempted from "further school attendance by School Boards".[71] In most provinces, this meant that these girls had to be at least sixteen years old or have passed Standard 6. The same parameters were implemented for the recruitment for military service of school-aged boys.[72] Male and female volunteers who were under 18 years old had to obtain their parents' consent.[73]

Medical requirements were just as broad as the age and education requirements. Women hoping to join the WADC had to be a minimum of 5 ft. (1.52m) tall, without shoes, and weigh a minimum of 108 lbs (49 kg), fully clothed.[74] Basic medical examinations were undertaken at a number of centres throughout the Union, as well as in the South West Africa

[67] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 13/11/1941.
[68] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 13/11/1941.
[69] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 13/11/1941.
[70] SANDFA, "The Union at War: How to Join the Forces" in *Nongqai*, June 1940, Vol. XXXI, No. 6. pp. 653-654.
[71] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Directorate of Recruiting: Weekly Review No. 21, 16/10/1941.
[72] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Directorate of Recruiting: Weekly Review No. 21, 16/10/1941.
[73] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[74] The current average height for white South African women over 15-years-old, by comparison, is 5'3 (1.62m) and weight is 144.8 lb. (65.7 Kg) according to the South African Demographic and Health Survey 2003 (Medical Research Council, "South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2003", Pretoria, 2007).

Protectorate, by "women medical practitioners".[75] Recruits were accepted at medical Class B2, meaning that they were able to walk (rather than march) five miles and could see and hear well enough for "ordinary" purposes. Class C3 recruits were accepted only in clerical positions, if they possessed strong enough eyesight and owned their own spectacles.[76]

As with male soldiers the female recruits had to be fit for service and these requirements were strictly regulated.[77] Medical examinations were necessary, according to gender and cultural historian Corinna Peniston-Bird: "in order for war to be waged effectively, the body of the individual was classified and reclassified according to the needs of the armed forces and the labour market, and by sex, age, and physical fitness".[78] In other words, the civilian body had to be categorised as either fit or unfit to become a military body. This led to the creation of medical classifications – used both in Britain and in the Union – that signified a recruit's suitability for service. Grade numbers 1 to 4 signified the recruit's physical health and strength; with 1 demarcating those who were in good health and 4 indicating those who were "permanently incapable of the kind or degree of exertion" required for service.[79] These grades were supplemented by a letter grade. "A" and "B" demarcated those who were the most fit for service abroad, "C" those fit for service at home only, "D" those who were temporarily unfit for service, and "E" those who were permanently unfit.[80]

WADC applicants had to state whether or not they were married and, if so, whether they had children. This was not required of men who volunteered with the UDF. Married women attestees had to obtain consent from their husbands before they were allowed to join the WADC, in the same way that minors had to first receive the consent of their guardians.[81] Furthermore, women with children were allowed to join the WADC provided that they had "provided adequate provision for the care of their children"[82] and had filled in and signed a

[75] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 17/12/1941.
[76] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 17/12/1941.
[77] As is demonstrated by the case of Jean Weightman who was deemed to be physically unsuited to the work of PT trainer, as is detailed in Chapter 3.
[78] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), p. 33
[79] Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", p. 34.
[80] Peniston-Bird, p. 35.
[81] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[82] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Recruitment of Women with Children, 24/10/1942.

"Care of Children" form to be approved by the officers at headquarters.[83] The same restrictions were not placed on male volunteers with children. Although those who volunteered had to adhere to military standards and requirements in order to join the WADC, they had to fulfil their role as mothers first and foremost in the eyes of the UDF's top brass. Seeking the permission of their husbands also attests to the continued paternalistic way in which women were treated within the broader social structure in the country.

From February 1940 onward, those men who were willing to serve overseas – first, "anywhere in Africa" and later "anywhere overseas" – would have to sign a special oath indicating that they had volunteered for this duty. To distinguish these soldiers from those who had not taken the oath, an orange tab was worn on the epaulette.[84] Like the men of the UDF, the women of the WADC had to indicate if they were willing to "engage in the Active Citizen Force, whether within or outside the limits of South Africa for the duration of the present war".[85] This meant that the Springdoes could also take the so-called "Red Tab Oath".

In summary, when looking at the formation of the WADC, it becomes clear that the position of this corps as a military body was not a simple matter. Like other Allied women's auxiliary services, the WADC was carefully framed by the military elites as auxiliary and nothing more due to the need to protect and maintain gender norms when women entered the masculine space of the military. In South Africa another layer of social preservation was present in the UDF; racial divisions also had to be maintained. White women and black and coloured men could not be allowed to become more than auxiliaries without disrupting social hierarchies; in both military and civilian society. Despite this proscription on the Springdoes' status within the UDF, the organisational structures of the male and female arms of the South African military mirrored each other. Both the UDF and WADC served as an umbrella for the three arms of service: the army, air force and navy or their female auxiliary services. Recruitment standards were also generally similar in both the UDF and WADC. However, the most significant difference is that married women had to gain their husbands' consent to join the WADC and indicate that they had made provision for the care of children. Men did not. The gendered responsibilities of women as a mother had to be taken care of first and foremost.

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[83] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Circular no. 12/1942 Recuiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 10/3/1942.
[84] Nasson, "South Africa", p. 246; Fokkens, "Afrikaner Unrest Within South Africa During the Second World War and the Measures Taken to Suppress It", p. 133; Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 92; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, 175.
[85] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, Form of Application for Enlistment for whole-time Voluntary service in Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, n.d.

From this it could be said that the exact place of the WADC as part of the larger UDF was ambiguous: it was neither truly a part of the military nor was it truly separate. But this shifted as the war progressed.

## 2.2 "It is not 'men's work' or 'women's work' but the world's work": Recruitment Efforts and Propaganda before and after the Recruitment Crisis of 1942

This section investigates how women were drawn into the WADC through recruitment campaigns and propaganda efforts by the UDF. It also discusses some of the political, economic and social factors that may have prevented women from volunteering. It is argued that there is a difference in the ways in which women's motives for volunteering were seen by the military elites and women's own motivations. This contrast became particularly distinct in light of the recruitment crisis of 1942.

Initially, recruitment for the WADC – the WAAS and the WAAF, in particular – was run by their civilian counterparts – the SAWAS and WVAF, respectively. According to a July 1941 circular entitled "Requisitioning and Recruiting: Instructions" – specifically aimed at "more clearly [defining] the recruiting requisitioning position for full-time service in WAAS", the duty of SAWAS was to "maintain interest and propaganda in full-time service for women, and to ensure that the needs are kept constantly before the public".[86]

The largest change to recruiting procedure for the WADC came about at the end of 1941. In August 1941, a weekly recruiting review from the Directorate of Recruiting made sure to clarify that:

> […] recruiting for the Women's Auxiliary Army Service [was] done only through the organisation of the South African Women's Auxiliary Service. Under no circumstances [would] Recruiting Officers of the Union Defence Forces recruit female volunteers. Their functions [were] strictly limited in this respect to drawing attention to the need for female volunteers and advising prospective recruits to apply for enlistment through […]

[86] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Requisitioning and Recruiting: Instructions: Consolidated and Revised, 2/7/1941.

the South African Women's Auxiliary Services.[87]

In December of 1941, this was changed. A circular dealing with recruiting for the WADC stated that:

> […] all recruiting officers […] are asked to recruit in collaboration with the SAWAS and the WVAF for the WADC […] The SA Women's Auxiliary Services and the Women's Volunteer Air Force are, on the other hand, asked to reciprocate by doing everything possible to promote the recruitment of *male volunteers* [emphasis added].[88]

Rather than SAWAS and the WVAF only being responsible for the recruiting of women, they were now also tasked with recruiting men for the UDF; and male recruiting officers were tasked with also recruiting women. It was more important to bring in recruits than it was to maintain gender-segregated recruiting pathways.

While recruiting drives run by the SAWAS and WVAF were a common method through which recruits were drawn into both the WADC and the UDF, others found their way into wartime service through an interest sparked by newspaper advertisements and reports, or radio broadcasts. In the first years of the war, as pointed out by Chetty, these were often framed around the importance of civic duty: calling on women as bastions of the "Home Front" to do their duty not only for their country but also to leave a better, more peaceful world for their children.[89] Much the same appeals to civic duty were made in Britain, both for male and female service – particularly with the Home Guard. The home had to be defended from invasion as the domain of the protected female, and in the words of Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, "'home' was used (as in other wartime contexts) to stand for both dwelling place and nation, and if women were the cornerstone of one, then by analogy they were at the heart of the other".[90] This similarity is most strikingly demonstrated in the advertisment depicted in the opening paragraph of Chapter 1.

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[87] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Directorate of Recruiting – Weekly Review No. 14, 23/8/1941.
[88] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 1/12/1941.
[89] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Imagining National Unity: South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War", *Kronos*, no. 38 (2012), p. 113.
[90] Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, "Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War", p. 232.

Frankie Monama, in his thesis studying the use of propaganda in South Africa during World War II, has noted that tactics of emotionally appealing to duty and patriotism were especially effective for radio: "The broadcast messages were designed to arouse emotions and to break down the attraction to Nazi ideals […] Radio was exploited as a powerful means for the public to hear senior government officials and military officers in the country making earnest appeals for military service".[91]

In radio programmes, these earnest appeals were also put forward for the women of the nation. South African women were called upon as "the strength of the nation [that] is in the homes of its people" to do their part to raise morale.[92] This call for women to serve wartime needs was couched in terms of (briefly) eschewing gendered work roles for the sake of a more crucial fight. This can be seen in the script for a radio propaganda broadcast aimed at women and getting them more involved in the war effort. In the broadcast on Thursday 11 September 1941, one of the "hundreds of women who for the duration of the war [were] adapting themselves to the work of the men who are at the front" called upon other women to join the women's services. She stated that: "The touchstone of the selection [had] become not sex, but the need of the moment. It [was] not 'men's work' or 'women's work' but the world's work".[93] Women's sudden new roles as auxiliaries in the military were tentative. As noted by Chetty, there "was the strong sense that their work was of a temporary nature, lasting only for the duration of the war. In many cases the training they had received would only be of benefit during the post-war era in the home or in socially acceptable roles".[94] This supports similar observations made by De Groot and Langman in Chapter 1. Appeals such as this may have gone some way to assuage this uncertainty by emphasising the importance of the work over its temporary nature.

The imagery of past women was also exhumed from the archive. The "initiative and adaptability" shown by the women of the 1820 settlers and the Voortrekkers, for example, served as a shining example of the resilience of women in the past.[95] A similar tactic was used in propaganda posters aimed at enticing white men to volunteer for the UDF. Posters were

[91] Fankie Lucas Monama, "Wartime Propaganda In the Union of South Africa, 1939-1945" (PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2014), p. 113.
[92] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 61 Women and the War – Union, Transcription of English Programme "A" Tuesday September 9th 7:45pm.
[93] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 61 Women and the War – Union, Transcription of English Programme "A" Tuesday September 11th 7:45pm.
[94] Chetty, "Imagining National Unity : South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War", p. 110.
[95] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 61 Women and the War – Union, Transcription of English Programme "A" Tuesday September 9th 7:45pm.

produced that used the imagery of the commandos of the South African War (1899-1902) creating a visual connection to male heroes of the past.[96] For the women, the heroines of the past (the 1820 settlers for English-speakers and Voortrekkers for the Afrikaner) were linked to the concept of the *Volksmoeder* (the mother of the nation): the stoic and heroic role model crafted for Afrikaner women that was used by the state in a number of ways.[97]

In the context of a nation divided between Afrikaner and English-speakers and those who were pro- or anti-war, recruiters could not easily appeal to notions of imperial kinship as in other Dominion nations. Instead, "there was less of an emphasis on the commonality of the 'imperial family' and more attention was paid to recasting the war effort in Afrikanerised terms".[98] Just like the heroines of the past, potential recruits were tasked with no longer leaving "most of the initiative to the men"[99] but to do their part in serving the nation's wartime needs.

Calls to the past and "doing one's duty" were common images used in recruiting appeals in what Chetty has identified as the first of three phases of propaganda during the War; lasting from South Africa's entrance into the conflict until 1942.[100] However, by 1942, the WADC and the UDF found that recruiting was "almost at a standstill",[101] marking a second period of propaganda efforts. A general sense of "war weariness" had settled over South Africa by 1942. Burdened by a seemingly never-ending war, the initial enthusiasm that had led many to join up had faded. This was compounded, according to Chetty, by "less than ideal conditions on the home front".[102] These included anti-war malcontents, rationing and the pressure felt by many women who were now, often for the first time, the sole bread-winner having either gone into war work in, for example, armaments manufacture or through their involvement in the WADC while their husbands were serving overseas. In addition, the fall of Tobruk saw the husbands, brothers or sons of many women killed or captured. This culminated in a sense of

[96] Deirdre Pretorius, "SLUIT NOU AAN! South African Union Defence Force Recruitment Posters from the Second World War", *South African Historical Journal* 71, no. 1 (2019), p. 65.
[97] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Imagining National Unity : South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War", p. 113.
[98] Michael Cardo, "'Fighting a Worse Imperialism': White South African Loyalism and the Army Education Services (AES) during the Second World War," *South African Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (2002), p. 145.
[99] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 61 Women and the War – Union, Transcription of English Programme "A" Tuesday September 9th 7:45pm.
[100] Chetty, "Imagining National Unity : South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War", p. 107.
[101] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Memorandum: Formation of a Women's ACF Unit, 4/12/1941.
[102] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", 125.

"uncertainty and pessimism"[103] that further added to a crisis in recruiting. New tactics had to be adopted.

Director of Recruiting, Colonel GCG Werdmuller realised that more personalised approaches were needed to draw women into military service; "public meetings, poster, screen and press advertising" were no longer enough.[104] As noted by Chetty, recruitment for women during the recruitment crisis began to take on a more nuanced outlook. Rather than calling to ideals of national service in a time of crisis, recruiters were instead to appeal to women's vanity. Military service was painted as glamorous.

Fears that women in the WADC would become "masculinised" through their incorporation into the male world of the military were allayed by presenting the women's corps as upholding femininity; as a finishing school.[105] This motif of women's service in auxiliary units was common and was often used as a way to emphasise that it was a "safe" venture in terms of upholding "correct" femininities. Nasson, for example, points out that the women of the WAAF "endured depiction of service life as some sort of adventurous finishing school".[106] It was as part of this drive that Commander J. Dalgleish, Director of the South African Naval Forces (DSANF), suggested that the WANS have a "distinctive and attractive uniform"[107] which would be an "added incentive" for potential recruits.[108] There is, however, little indication that the Swans were especially drawn to the WANS because of the attractiveness of the uniform.

Added to war weariness was the complexity of South Africa's political position regarding the UDF's involvement in the War. The political situation in South Africa during World War II was fraught with tension. The War re-opened old wounds between Afrikaners and English-speaking white South Africans and divided the white population between those who supported the Union's position as one of the Allied Nations and those who stood against this. This division was particularly prominent within the Afrikaner community.

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[103] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", p. 125.
[104] Chetty, p. 100.
[105] Chetty, p. 100-101.
[106] Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 121.
[107] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 2.
[108] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS. Distinctive Uniform: WAAS dets. att. SANF, 6/10/1942.

While English-speaking South Africans demonstrated what South African historian John Lambert described as "remarkable unanimity of purpose during the war",[109] the reactions of Afrikaners to the War were much more ambiguous. While the typical view of Afrikaners' reactions is that, as a group, they were wholly opposed to the war, seeing it as a "British" war in which they had no part – if not as outright Axis sympathisers – there were, in fact, many Afrikaners who supported South Africa's entrance into World War II. However, their position was not always a comfortable one. For the minority of so-called "King's Afrikaners" their loyalties aligned with the considerations of Britain and the Commonwealth and they were therefore "prepared, enthusiastically and unequivocally, to take up arms and donate their bodies to the needs of London".[110] Other Afrikaners saw the War, in the words of Nasson, as a moment of "snatched relief from joblessness and poverty".[111] Joining the UDF was an opportunity to secure work rather than a display of deeper loyalties.[112]

This is not to suggest that most Afrikaners supported South Africa's entrance into the conflict – be it eagerly or begrudgingly. Many Afrikaners held strongly anti-war sentiments. To a not insignificant proportion of Afrikaner Nationalists, this loyalty to Britain and the Commonwealth was seen as evidence of disloyalty to South Africa. The nationalists firmly believed that South Africa had no reason to become involved in what they saw as a British war.[113] This manifested not only in many Afrikaners preferring peace or neutrality, but for others being anti-war meant "anti-*British* and thus, to one degree or another, either implicitly or explicitly pro-*German*".[114] These political divisions around South Africa's place in the War, had an impact on recruitment.

The recruitment of the first batch of WADC recruits seems to have been simple enough; drawing from women who had already volunteered for war work through wartime organisations like SAWAS or the WVAF and through appeals to duty and service. This combination of political and social factors meant that as the war drew on the WADC found it ever more challenging to entice women into joining the Corps. This was not due to heavy restrictions on who could join the Corps, but rather a general lack of interest, so argued the military elite. However, it was not only the malaise of a seemingly never-ending conflict or

[109] John Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", p. 61.
[110] Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 16.
[111] Nasson, p. 16.
[112] This is what Albert Grundlingh has described as a form of "economic conscription" for poor white Afrikaners. See: Albert Grundlingh, "The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45".
[113] Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", p. 60.
[114] Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 15. Emphasis in original.

political and social tensions that discouraged women from volunteering for service with the WADC. Several other reasons were suggested for this slowing down of recruitment, including the "expense of uniforms, tram-fares, petrol and food a burden which [hindered] their service".[115] One document concludes that, were it not for these financial restraints, many more women would like to help in the war effort.[116] It is here that one notices that the military could no longer rely on the kindness of middle-class women. They had to make provisions to entice other classes of white women into the war effort.

Similarly, they had to entice women from less restrictive and higher paying employment in the public sector. By drifting into civilian work, those who would otherwise have been potential WAAFs, for example, were not only assured of work but also enjoyed more freedom and higher rates of pay than their sisters in the Air Force. Munitions workers, for example, earned 17s 4d a day while a skilled WAAF artisan received 17s 3d a day.[117] Although the difference of one penny a day is not a vast amount between civilian and military pay, the disparity rather stems from the skill-level of these two jobs. White female munitions workers were classified as "temporary" workers and were restricted to semi-skilled jobs.[118] As unskilled or semi-skilled workers, these women munitions workers did not require prior technical training. In contrast, WAAF artisans received eight to 12 weeks of specialised training before starting their work.[119] Therefore, civilian work was more attractive as a similar (or higher) wage could be earned even by those women who had little practical training or skill. More so, they would not have been subjected to the confines of military life.

Others, like Werdmuller (the Director of Recruiting and Officer Commanding for the WAAS from 1942 onwards), argued that it was not the work conditions but rather an unwillingness to participate in the war effort which hindered the recruitment process. He argued that there were "thousands of young women" who had no valid reasons for not volunteering. He put this down to their being unwilling to sacrifice their personal freedom or comforts, which "they apparently [placed] above the need of their country".[120] It is for this

[115] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Memorandum: Formation of a Women's ACF Unit, 4/12/1941.
[116] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Memorandum: Formation of a Women's ACF Unit, 4/12/1941.
[117] K. Jameson and D. Ashburner, *The South African WAAF* (Pietermartizburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1948), p. 10
[118] Nancy L. Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa.", *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001), p. 1191.
[119] The training of women in the WADC is dealt with individually for each branch in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.
[120] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, 24/4/1941.

reason that Chetty suggests that women had to be enticed with "incentives tailored to meet their individual needs".[121] This was tailored even further when analysing each arm of the WADC.

In the wake of this apathy, by 1942 it was proposed that reserves be established for the two original branches of the WADC, the SAWAS and WVAF. These would-be part-time members who could be called up in an emergency and could potentially grow into full-time service. The reserve would ensure a pool of full-time members. By terming it a reserve, it was expected to appeal to female university students once they had finished their tertiary education.[122] Werdmuller had reservations. He feared that this would create another smokescreen behind which able-bodied women would continue to shirk their duties.[123] In 1943, however, the establishment of part-time WAAS and WAAF organisations was reconsidered.[124] This was to prove particularly beneficial for the recruitment of coastal artillery specialists.[125]

In addition to changing recruitment tactics and the proposal of creating women's ACF units, a further – and, in the racial context of early twentieth century South Africa, perhaps more unusual – proposal was also put forward to boost recruits. In December 1942, a suggestion was put forward that coloured women be employed in the WADC as attested personnel in the women's camps to "undertake the lower classifications of the work and so release European women".[126] In other words, for coloured women to become the auxiliaries to the auxiliaries; serving much the same role as that of the NMC for the white men of the UDF.[127] It is here that racial hierarchy and hierarchy within the gendered spectrum provided a space for white women to exert power over coloured women.

It was never suggested that black women be attested. Many were employed as unattested "domestics" in various camps. While their labour was seen as "eminently satisfactory", there was a reluctance to formalise them into the military structure because they served, very sadly, as proverbial cannon fodder who could be dismissed within 24 hours'

[121] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", p. 107.
[122] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Memorandum: Formation of a Women's ACF Unit, 4/12/1941 & Memo to Secretary for Defence, n.d.
[123] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, 24/4/1941.
[124] The creation of a part-time WANS organisation was not considered. The WANS only came into being in 1943 and did not have a peacetime, civilian equivalent that could easily be transformed into such an ACF unit.
[125] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 96 Employment of WAAS personnel on part time military service, Employment of WAAS personnel on part time military service, 29/3/1943.
[126] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, Employment of Coloured Women, 21/12/1942.
[127] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, RE: Employment of Non-European Personnel, 1/1/1943.

notice.[128] Reflecting the reality outside of the military structures, black women were at the end of both the racial and gender spectrums and as such, bore the worst of both gender and racial discrimination by not even being considered as possible recruits for this so-called "world's work".

Black men too, were subjected to further restrictions. One of the main reasons for attesting coloured women into the WADC was to replace black men who had been employed in the women's camps. They performed many of the "lower classifications" of work. They were also employed to undertake the menial tasks in men's camps. It is the context of resurging narratives about the uncontrollable desires of black men's sexuality that fears arose about their close proximity to white women in the women's camps. In the initial note suggesting the attestation of coloured women, the removal of "Native personnel" is justified due to fears that "sooner or later the employment of Natives in women's camps may have unfortunate repercussions".[129] This fear speaks directly to white South Africa's paranoia about the *swartgevaar* or black peril in the first part of the twentieth century.[130]

The recruiting of Coloured women however, also proved contentious. After a conference held between Col. Werdmuller and several high-ranking female officers of the WADC, it was decided that the attestation of Coloured women was neither "advisable nor practicable".[131] Concerns about discipline and control were raised. It was argued that "difficulty would be experienced in drawing the line between certain duties undertaken by the [WADC] and those of the coloured personnel".[132] Furthermore the so-called "coloured question in this country" was brought up as a potential hindrance to this scheme.[133] It was feared that bringing coloured labour into the camps would draw "considerable criticism from the public" and that this would negatively affect white recruitment.[134]

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[128] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, RE: Employment of Non-European Personnel, 1/1/1943.
[129] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, Employment of Coloured Women, 21/12/1942.
[130] The s*wartgevaar* was the perceived "demographic, political, sexual, social and economic" threat that black people posed to white South Africa (Jeremy Seekings, "'Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go under': Swartgevaar and the Origins of South Africa's Welfare State, 1924-1929", *Journal of African History* 48, no. 3, 2007, p. 382). Black men were particularly seen as posing a sexual threat to white women.
[131] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, RE: Employment of Non-European Personnel, 1/1/1943.
[132] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, RE: Employment of Non-European Personnel', 'RE: Employment of Non-European Personnel, 1/1/1943.
[133] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, RE: Employment of Non-European Personnel, 1/1/1943.
[134] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, RE: Employment of Non-European Personnel, 1/1/1943.

Although draft regulations were drawn up for a Non-European Women's Army Auxiliary Service,[135] it was decided that no Non-European sections of the WADC would be created.[136] Instead, unattested black and coloured women were to take over cleaning and similar duties in place of black men at the women's camps.

The military, as a microcosm of society, racial and gender order had to be maintained.[137] The gender and racial hierarchies in the country were reflected in its military. White men represented hegemonic masculinity in South Africa, in contrast to the subordinate masculinity of black and coloured men.[138] So too did white women represent hegemonic femininity measured against the subordinate black and coloured femininity.[139] This combination of white hegemonic masculinity and femininity aided the "reproduction of domination" along racial as well as gendered axes and the women of the WADC were both victim and party to these intersecting forms of discrimination at a command level, not necessarily through interpersonal interactions.[140]

Drawing women into wartime service with the WADC was a complex issue that reflects shifts in the women's corps framing as auxiliary. The practical need to maintain or increase manpower for the South African military, for example, outweighed the ideological need to keep recruiting for the men's and women's services separate. There was also a shift in how wartime service was marketed for women. As pointed out by Chetty, in the first years of the War appeals to civic duty and the heroes or heroines of the past were effective in drawing both men and women into the South African military.[141] However, with the recruitment crisis, this changed. Military elites, like Wermuller, saw women as not joining the WADC for "selfish" reasons and propaganda began to appeal towards women's vanity. Women's own reasons for choosing not to become involved in wartime military service were rooted in more quotidian concerns. The divided nature of the South African population's opinions regarding the Union's involvement in the War prevented both men and women from joining the military. And economic concerns

[135] SANDFA, WADC, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, Regulations for the Non-European Women's Auxiliary Army Service, n.d
[136] SANDFA, WADC, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, Employment of Coloured women in the UDF, 28/7/1943.
[137] Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective", p. 15 & SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, Employment of Coloured Women, 21/12/1942; Employment of Coloured Women, 28/1/1943; Employment of Coloured Women, 13/2/1943.
[138] See: R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept", *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005), pp. 829–59.
[139] Laura T Hamilton et al., "Hegemonic Femininities and Intersectional Domination," *Sociological Theory* 37, no. 4 (2019), p. 316.
[140] Hamilton et al., p. 316.
[141] Chetty, "Imagining National Unity : South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War", p. 109

outweighed duty. Therefore, in terms of recruiting and propaganda there was a difference between how women of the WADC were seen by the military elites and their own lived experiences. This difference between the perceptions of military men and the members of the WADC in relation to the women's place in the UDF was not only present in recruiting but continued when the recruits became servicewomen.

## 2.3 Uniform, Uniformity, and Markers of Military Membership

As an official part of the South African military structure, the WADC bore the hallmarks of belonging to the UDF: they were given authorised ranks, uniforms and insignia. These official markers of military status demonstrated the WADC had a place within the larger South African defence force. However, this position was tenuous. Uniform and insignia serve as a visual identifier of military membership.[142] Badges of rank place the individual wearing them within the military hierarchy. However, as these were women brought into the masculine military, members of the WADC could not be granted these markers in the same ways as servicemen without upsetting social structures of gender.[143] This section will discuss the debates and limitations that surrounded these markers of military belonging when granted to South African servicewomen in order to show how the ideological concerns about maintaining gender norms and the self-perceptions of the Springdoes were sometimes at odds.

### 2.3.1 *Ja, Korporaal!*[144]: Contextualising Rank Structures in the WADC

The relative ranks of women serving in the WADC were in large part similar to their male compatriots in the UDF. However, for the WADC, promotion stopped at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (See Appendix A).[145] This was done to ensure that the masculine hierarchy

[142] Nathan Joseph and Nicholas Alex, "The Uniform : A Sociological Perspective," *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (1972), p. 719.
[143] Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", p. 15 & Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 302.
[144] Afrikaans: "Yes, Corporal". Commanly used to indicate assent.
[145] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.

of the military could never be undermined by the presence of a higher-ranking women.[146] Similar concerns were raised in other women's auxiliary services internationally. For the WAC in the US, Hampf points out, there were fears that "women generals would rush about the country dictating orders to male personnel".[147] Women, in their carefully demarcated roles as auxiliaries, could not be afforded this authority.

In the British women's auxiliary services, members of the WAAF, WRNS and ATS also used a rank structure to indicate hierarchy within these services. While South African women were given the same ranks as their male counterparts, British women were granted rank equivalents. This meant that the titles of ranks of equivalent levels differed between the male and female services. In the army, for example, the rank of Captain became Junior Commander in the ATS,[148] even though both men and women wore the same insignia, or badges of rank, indicating their position within the structure. This is observed across all three arms of service in Britain. This "indulgence" was tolerated because it was made abundantly clear that the ranks were temporary and only for the duration of the war.

Additionally, the rank structure of the British auxiliary services, despite the use of equivalent rather than direct ranks, went much higher than in South Africa. For South African women promotion was capped at Lieutenant-colonel. The highest rank in the ATS was Chief Controller (equivalent to Major-General in the army). For the WAAF the highest rank was Air Chief Commandant (RAF Air Vice-Marshal) and in the WRNS it was Director (Royal Navy Rear-Admiral).[149] It should also be noted that these rank titles were not generally used outside of the context of the military. This can be seen in newsreel footage of members of the Mechanised Transport Corps of the ATS departing for service in Africa in 1941. Their Officer Commanding is referred to as "Mrs Keith Newall" rather than by her ATS rank title.[150] In contrast, a clip of a Swan trying on a diving suit as part of the naval exhibit at the "Speed the Victory" Fair held in Johannesburg in 1944, refers to the Swan in question as "Leading Swan Bennett".[151]

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[146] Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", p. 15
[147] Hampf. p. 15
[148] *The Book of the WAAF: A Practical Guide to the Women's Branch of the RAF* (London: The Amalgamated Press, 1942), n.p.
[149] *The Book of the WAAF: A Practical Guide to the Women's Branch of the RAF*.
[150] https://www.britishpathe.com/video/british-women-for-the-african-front (01/10/2020).
[151] https://www.britishpathe.com/video/a-swan-makes-a-dive-aka-woman-diver/query/%22South+Africa%22+AND+%22Swans%22 (01/10/2020).

While the ranks of the UDF and the WADC were equal, the women of the WADC – from private to Lieutenant-colonel – were also referred to by their marital status. For example, during her service in the WAAS, future anti-apartheid activist Mary Benson would have been referred to as Private (Miss) Benson in official documentation. This seems to have been unique to South Africa. This was done to distinguish between servicemen and -women.

Despite the apparent equality of rank between South African servicemen and -women, the Defence Force still kept the WADC in the position of a separate and secondary organisation to the main body of fighting men. One of the earliest indications of the UDF's desire to keep the women's service as secondary to the military proper can be found in the notes for the draft constitution of the WADC by the Department of Defence concerning the paying of compliments and saluting, and precedence.

Here it was initially suggested that precedence between officers within the WAAS or WAAF was determined by date of promotion to current rank. This order of precedence meant that between two officers of the same rank, for example Captain, the one promoted to this rank first would have seniority over the other. The same order of precedence did not hold outside the WADC. Rather officers of the Permanent Force and of the Active Citizen Force would take precedence over officers of the WADC of the same rank, date of promotion notwithstanding.[152] This meant that a male Captain would always have seniority over a female Captain, even if she had held the rank longer. This was implemented, according to Lt. Col. (Mrs) Dunning's notes, so that a (female) officer of the WADC could never take command over any (male) officers of the UDF.[153]

Additionally, members of the WADC were only to salute officers of their service, and soldiers (read, members of the UDF proper) were not to salute officers of the WADC.[154] Lt. Col. (Mrs) Dunning's amendments to the original outline maintains the superiority of male officers. She notes, however, that the paying of compliments should "apply reciprocally to all ranks of the UDF and Women's Auxiliaries" as was the practice overseas.[155] Clearly the adaptations were made to appease local male bravado despite her expressed desires to follow

[152] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[153] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[154] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[155] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.

international standards. The gender debates continued into discussions around the physical emblems of belonging to the UDF.

### 2.3.2 Earning their Pips: Badges of Rank as Markers of Military Belonging

In addition to being granted the same rank titles as servicemen, the WADC wore the same badges indicating rank as the servicemen. However, in May 1941 it was proposed that the badges of rank for both the WAAS and the WAAF be altered in order to differentiate the auxiliary services from the main body of the UDF.[156] The Adjutant General argued that the "badges of rank (stars and crowns) should in the first instance not have been allowed". [157] He felt that it would be better to immediately change the badges of rank worn by the WADC than "perpetuat[ing] the mistake".[158] The proposal claimed that the badges of rank with which the WADC had been furnished were simply placeholders. The granting of these symbols of military stature was seen by the office of the Adjutant General as little more than a courtesy that had been granted to the women. In his response to the women's complaints, it was reiterated that women in the UDF were supplementary; stating that "women cannot wholly replace men".[159] The women themselves, however, were insulted by the suggestion that their being granted equal badges of rank was a mistake. It was seen as a slight to their wartime service.

Lt. Col (Mrs) Bekker of the WAAS stated that "so drastic and slighting a change" could serve "no practical purpose", adding that the change would discourage recruiting and that it would "detract from the efficiency of the service".[160] Because of their similarity to those worn by male members of the UDF, many servicewomen felt that a change would negatively impact their relative rank status, therefore, women officers, in particular, saw this as an insult.[161] Others noted the discrepancy between their treatment and that of their sisters in the British women's auxiliary corps of the Air Force and Navy who wore the same badges of rank as their

[156] The WANS was not included in this debate as this branch of the WADC had not yet been created.
[157] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Addendum to Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.
[158] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Addendum to Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.
[159] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations: WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.
[160] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Addendum to Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.
[161] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations: WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.

male counterparts. Clearly these servicewomen felt very strongly about their "pips" (as many dubbed their insignia) as a representation of their service and recognition of the importance of their war work. This issue not only demonstrated the feelings of pride that the WAAS held regarding their uniforms but also the difficulty the UDF had while setting up the new service. On the one hand civilian women had to become military but on the other hand social norms had to be maintained.

Due to their fervent campaigning against this proposed change – particularly by the WAAF – the women of the WADC were allowed to wear the same badges as their counterparts in the UDF. What this debacle demonstrates is that – despite ways in which they were framed as auxiliary by the South African military – they did not necessarily see themselves as such. They fought this battle and won, showing flexibility of the the military high command. But, they still had to conform to the military code.

### 2.2.3 Does this dress make me look uniform?: Uniforming Women for Military Service

WADC volunteers were uniformed directly upon attestation, primarily as a way to maintain discipline.[162] As pointed out by historian Sandra Swart, the lack of homogenous uniforms of the Boer Commandoes was seen by the British as a weakness. Or, in the words of a British officer at the time of the creation of the UDF: "if you have a large number of people in plain clothes, you get very little discipline".[163] Even if the "girls" were expected to look "pretty", they were expected to conform and be disciplined.

It was not only important for the WADC to function as a military institution, but the "girls" themselves also had to look the part. Uniform is a key component of military identity. The uniformity of soldiers' appearance – through the issuing of homogenous clothing and hair-cuts – strips the men of individual identity and, thus, moulds them into the correct masculine, military identity.[164] Uniforms visually identify members as distinct from non-members.[165] When a new recruit is issued his uniform, he is no longer a civilian and he must sacrifice his personal identity for the sake of the collective.[166] The women of the WADC had to follow suit.

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[162] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-1 Supply of Clothing - WAAS, Telegram from Cape Command 2, n.d.
[163] Sandra Swart, "'A Boer and His Gun and His Wife Are Three Things Always Together': Republican Masculinity and the 1914 Rebellion", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, no. 4 (1998), p. 747.
[164] Regina F. Titunik, "The Myth of the Macho Military", *Polity* 40, no. 2 (2008), p. 139.
[165] Joseph and Alex, "The Uniform : A Sociological Perspective", p. 719.
[166] Joseph and Alex, p. 721.

However, the task of uniforming women for military service during World War II – both in South Africa and abroad – was complicated by the simultaneous need to *re*create these women as members of a military service while still retaining their femininity. As pointed out by historian Tessa Stone, the symbolic integration of women into military service – through the adoption of uniform – was seen as subversive and contemporary debates questioned if uniform would "defeminise its wearers"; creating "unnatural" or "neuter" creatures in the place of real women.[167] Women in the military, therefore, felt compelled to maintain their femininity in innovative ways.[168]

Equally, women's bodies had to retain the "correct" feminine form despite being used in masculine, military capacities. Peniston-Bird comments that the physical transformation of male bodies due to war work was welcomed, while changes in women's bodies for the same reasons were not. Citing the example of physical labour on farms performed by the Women's Land Army, she notes that when the Land Girls requested extra clothing allowances to compensate for the changes to their bodies due to the increased physical work, the request was denied. She states that:

> The transformation of the male body was welcomed: that of the female body problematic because it challenged rather than reinforced hegemonic gender roles. Whereas men's bodies were shown to be physically transformed by increasing militarization, women's transformation was on the surface only: a question of clothing – a uniform – which changed neither her physicality nor her role.[169]

While these issues of uniforming women's bodies for World War II service were rooted in the British women's auxiliary services, similar considerations and difficulties appeared when South African servicewomen were given military uniforms as members of the WADC. The issue of uniforms firstly differentiated the women of the WADC from its civilian originators,

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[167] Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 8, no. 4 (1999), pp. 615-616.

[168] This prejudice continued to later wars. Jacklyn Cock, for example, describes how the women of Umkhonto WeSizwe – during the armed struggle against apartheid – felt compelled to preserve their femininity (Jacklyn Cock, *Colonels & Cadres: War & Gender in South Africa*, (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 32 as did their counterparts in the South African Army Women's College (Esté Mari Kotzé, "Perspectives on Masculinity, Femininity and the South African Military : Gender Relations with Specific Focus on the Impact of the South African Army Women's College and the SADF (1971-1998)", Master's thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2015).

[169] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Civilians into Soldiers: War, the Body and British Army Recruits, 1939–45", *Contemporary British History* 30, no. 4 (2016), pp. 43-44.

the SAWAS and the SAWAA. While the SAWAS also wore uniforms while on duty, these were not compulsory and, much like their system of rank, these were not bestowed upon them officially by the Department of Defence. Rather, the SAWAS created their own system of uniform and markings of rank.[170] In the same way, the women of the SAWAA adopted their own "a very neat uniform" of "blue dungarees overalls for work and white overalls with blue forage caps for parades, with stripes on the epaulettes, to show the rank, and gold wings above the pocket for pilots".[171] The uniforms worn by the SAWAS and SAWAA were civilian uniforms signalling membership to civilian organisations. For the WADC the wearing of uniform and badges of rank was a military issue, officially regulated by the regulations of the UDF.

Strict guidelines were issued to the women of the WAAS regarding almost every aspect of their appearance. Clothing was to be made of serge (a type of twill fabric) for winter garments and of drill (a durable cotton fabric) for summer. Only officers were allowed gabardine (a twill-weave) uniforms as part of their walking-out dress.[172] Members could either procure ready-made uniforms from "Q" stores or they could receive a free issue of dress material from which they could have their own tailor-made on condition that the "cost of cut, make and trim" be paid from their allowance.[173] This did not, however, imply complete freedom. Uniforms were not to be modified, nor could badges or ornaments, other than those of the WADC, be worn. This extended to jewellery. Only wedding rings or "plain gold signet" engagement rings were permitted. Jewelled rings were not to be worn with uniforms.[174] The basic uniform requirements were laid out clearly in the regulations for the WAAS and WAAF specifying precisely each article of clothing and the colours and fabric from which they were to be made.[175]

The predominant colour of the uniforms of the UDF in the 1940s was khaki. This serviceable and camouflaging colour was worn by the South African Army and Air Force, but

[170] Lucy Bean, *Strangers in Our Midst* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1970), pp. 24-25.
[171] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 88.
[172] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-1 Supply of Clothing - WAAS, Uniform – WAAS, 17/1/1941. Again, specific differences existed for each individual branch.
[173] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-1 Supply of Clothing - WAAS, Uniform – WAAS, 17/1/1941.
[174] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[175] SANDFA, Pamphlets WW2: Woman's contribution, Regulations for the Women's Auxiliary Army Service, 1944, p. 11.

also by the WAAS, WAAF, WAMPC and the South African Military Nursing Service (SAMNS).[176]

The SANF and the WANS, however, wore navy-blue and white. The decision to kit out the Swans in a naval uniform – rather than adapting the uniforms already worn by the WAAS and WAAF – was based on a crude psychological motive: an appeal to women's supposed vanity. According to Laver, the combination of navy-blue and white was "'smart' for the mature woman and 'kind' to schoolgirl complexions".[177]

The notion that women's vanity played a role in their decision to join women's auxiliary services was not unique to South Africa. Those who joined the British women's auxiliary services of World War II, for example, were often drawn to the services that boasted the most attractive (or the most feminine) uniforms. Some branches of the British women's auxiliaries were inundated with volunteers, while others struggled to maintain their numbers.[178] Historian Jeremy Crang, in his book on women in the British Armed Forces during World War II, cites two women who admit to having chosen their service because of a personal preference for a "flattering blue uniform" and female vanity.[179] These women – Peggy Erskine-Tulloch and Iris Lambert – chose the WRNS and the British WAAF, respectively, because they both felt that navy or air force blue was a more flattering colour for them than the khaki of the ATS.[180] The "unflattering" khaki of the ATS was arguably a key reason for its reputation for taking those "left over" by the more popular services.[181]

The supposedly fashionable uniform of the Swans was not as appreciated by other members of South Africa's uniformed women's auxiliary services. According to the recollections of Swan telephonist L/Swan (Miss) Joyce Reid: "Somehow Army types did not seem to like us very much. They referred to us, rather cattily, as 'glamour girls'. This was no doubt due to our uniforms. Let's face it – what is smarter than the Navy"?[182] The Swans took great pride in their uniforms. Not because they were different from the other branches of the WADC, but because the uniforms were *theirs*. These distinct uniforms signalled that they

[176] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 10.
[177] Laver, p. 318.
[178] Anne De Courcy, *Debs at War: 1939-1945 How Wartime Changed Their Lives* (London: Phoenix, 2005), p. 71.
[179] Jeremy A. Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 30.
[180] Crang, p. 30.
[181] Crang, p. 30.
[182] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 2.

belonged to a specific group: the Navy.[183] In a sense, the uniform distinguished their role as seawomen and it led to resentment from other servicewomen. This suggests that some form of sectional or divisional identity formed around the Swans uniform, in contrast to the WADC, and provided them with an opportunity to celebrate both their femininity, role within the navy as well as distinguish their position within the WADC umbrella structure.


Figure 2.1 "Now tell me - why must you girls all wear your caps differently?"

The male perspective of these women in uniform was swift to detract from any of these markers. In predictable style, the women are objectified and ridiculed for deigning to exhibit any form of individuality. This is aptly illustrated in a cartoon drawn by a male contributor to the *Nongqai*. The cartoon (Figure 2.1)[184] is directed at a male audience and pokes fun at the perceived vanity of women portraying them as little less then pretty girls in a state of bewilderment.

The caricature does, however, point to a neglected deliberation on acceptable hairstyles for women in service. The women depicted wear their caps in various ways to accommodate some of the more outlandish hairdos which were *à la mode* during the war. No specific instructions for hairstyles were initially laid out in the WADC regulations other than that it must be tidily arranged and not worn loose if reaching below the collar.[185] This oversight allowed for these women to not only express some form of individuality within the confines of a military code but it also allowed them to maintain some semblance of the femininity if they so desired.

Similar attempts to maintain femininity despite the masculinity of military uniform have been identified by Crang in the context of the British women's auxiliary services. He describes servicewomen padding the soulders of their uniform jackets and shortening the lengths of their skirts to "create a more alluring silhouette".[186]

[183] Joseph and Alex, "The Uniform : A Sociological Perspective", p. 720.
[184] SANDFA, Cartoon taken from *Nongqai*, April 1944, XXXV, 4, p. 462.
[185] Although somewhat stricter guidelines were imposed later, these were still open for a degree of personal interpretation. SANDFA, WADC, Box 33, AS 10-1 Orders Standing WAAS, Standing Orders WAAS Barracks Imperial Hospital and Convalescent Depot Howick, n.d.
[186] Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p. 114.

Tessa Stone provides a counter argument. She suggests that British airwomen's apparent clinging to markers of femininity while in uniform – such as hairstyles or jewellery – was less a preoccupation with looking more feminine or less masculine than an attempt to "make themselves look smart within the military context".[187] She argues that it was not necessarily femininity that the women were striving for, but ways of asserting individuality:

> What did need more frequent reconfirmation, however, was their status as individuals, so just as aircrew sought to mark themselves out by wearing such non-uniform accessories as silk scarves (which were hardly a paean to masculinity), so airwomen sought to differentiate themselves from the herd through the cut of their greatcoat or the angle of their cap [188]

The need to retain some semblance of feminine individuality through hairdos, uniform adjustments or jewellery was not only rooted in the need to counteract the masculinity of their uniforms. In the words of one British WAAF officer, Muriel Gane Pushman, explaining her (and others') choice to wear daintier underwear instead of the regulation "passion killers": "On the surface we might all look the same […] but inderneath – ah, underneath – we were individual, female, and our souls were satin and lace".[189]

These markers of individuality led to a common assumption among military men that women were not as competent. Rather, as put forward by Summerfield, women were seen as being simply "motivated by the vain desire 'to parade around in uniform' as opposed, presumably, to doing a serious job of work; and that the inclusion of a feminine element in the army made a masculine institution look ridiculous."[190] The representation of the Springdoes in the cartoon above would suggest similar reflections were initially made about the women of the WADC. This changes over time, as discussed in later chapters.

Despite being part of the UDF, the Springdoes were seen first as decorative, feminine objects of desire by the men that surrounded them, and as military personnel second. This is strongly echoed in the pages of the *Nongqai.* At almost every mention of the women who served in and alongside the UDF – be they WADC, SAWAS or civilian clericals – mention

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[187] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 619.
[188] Stone, p. 618.
[189] Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p. 114.
[190] Penny Summerfield, "Gender and War in the Twentieth Century", *The International Hitory Review* 19, no. 1 (1997), p. 5.

was initially sure to be made of their attractiveness in one way or another. This is perhaps most obvious in the monthly column by the "Official Correspondent" for Defence Headquarters. Here "the ladies" (as both civilian clericals and WADC members are usually referred to) and their appearance are discussed in detail – so much so that in some editions this gets its own sub-column for that very purpose.[191]

The adoption of uniform and rank were key to the WADC becoming an official part of the defence forces of South Africa. Rank and the badges indicating rank brought these servicewomen into the military hierarchy but this had to be carefully regulated so as not to disrupt the social order. Women could not hold authority over men without an inversion of carefully preserved gender norms. In the eyes of UDF high command, giving servicewomen the same badges of rank as servicemen was a mistake that threatened the status of the military as a male preserve.

The women of the WADC held the opposite view. They saw their "pips" as an indication that they were part of the UDF. This tension between the WADC's own perception their military status and the perception of military men extended to uniform. For the men of the UDF, the uniforms of the WADC did little more than change the women from "pretty girls" to "pretty girls in uniform". Uniform, for the Springdoes, was key to the (re)creation of their identities from civilians to servicewomen.[192] Despite this, there are moments in which individuality and femininity were ironically allowed to sprout but, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, the level to which this occurred depended on the arm of the WADC. Furthermore, this had to be negotiated under a strict military disciplinary code implemented for all women of the WADC.

## 2.3 To Take Charge, to Care and to Teach: Instilling (Military) Discipline and (Military) Identity

Discipline is necessary to maintain military culture and this requires a "homogeneity of approach" within the broader military organisation.[193] Military culture instils shared aspects

[191] SANDFA, "Defence Headquarters by the Official Correspondent" in *Nongqai*, May 1941, Vol. XXXII, No. 5. p. 577.
[192] Joseph and Alex, "The Uniform : A Sociological Perspective", p. 721.
[193] Frank Ledwidge, "Cracking On : British Military Culture and Doctrine," in *Losing Small Wars* (Yale University Press, 2011), p. 137.

of discipline and modes of behaviour among the members of a nation's military. These are integral to the continued functioning of the military as an institution. For this purpose, three separate bodies came into being to aid in this transformative process: the Women's Auxiliary Military Police Corps to take charge, Welfare and Information Officers to care, and the Army Education Service to teach. Through these three bodies the women of the WADC were expected to conform to a collective military identity. This section discusses the intersection of war, gender, class and good citizenship as integral components in the creation of a collective servicewoman identity in the UDF. Evidence of transgressions of these institutional norms is also indicative of a tussle between institutional culture and the individual.

### 2.3.1 "Occurrences of an undesirable nature": The WAMPC and Military discipline

As the WADC was created through the War Measures Act (no. 13 of 1940) and was subject to the Defence Act of 1912, members had to adhere to the Military Discipline Code (MDC).[194] In an attempt to instil sanctioned military discipline amongst the women of the WADC, a decision was made in January 1941 to make provision "for the appointment of female Military Police within the existing women's organisations".[195] Initially all disciplinary matters were dealt with internally by the MDC but they were charged with enforcing discipline amongst the male soldiers.[196] As the WADC grew, the need arose to create a similar structure for servicewomen.[197]

One of the main contributing factors was the frequency of "AWOL's [away without leave] and deserters",[198] and "occurrences of an undesirable nature".[199] A report sent to the heads of the WAAS and WAAF on 17 October 1941, for example, notes the behaviour of

[194] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, n.d.
[195] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Untitled memo dated 17/1/1941
[196] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), WADC: Illegal absentees, Deserters and Re-enlistments, 11/6/1941.
[197] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), WADC: Illegal absentees, Deserters and Re-enlistments, 11/6/1941.
[198] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Women Disciplinary Corps, 2/10/1941.
[199] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Women Disciplinary Corps, 2/10/1941.

Springdoes on a train who had been drinking heavily and who appeared to "have no limit".[200] Their actions were "not to the credit of the Army".[201]

With no dedicated body of women to trace AWOLs and transport them back to their camp, camp officers had to take on this role in addition to their normal duties. This "increasingly difficult" state of affairs meant that WADC officers were "under extreme pressure and working long hours".[202] In addition, WADC members – as military women – could not be held by civilian police, nor could the task be transferred to the (male) military police.[203]

The main concern was the inappropriateness of male military police (MP) searching women.[204] The potential for perceived sexual immorality was a constant cause of anxiety for the UDF. In addition, the military command were wary of the moral fibre of the servicewomen. Women in the military were often portrayed as exhibiting "deviant" sexuality.[205] This included claims that they were lesbian or sexually overactive and dubbed *losmeisies*.[206]

The issue of male MPs searching women was not only related to problems of potential sexual impropriety but was also closely linked to racial anxieties. As with the (abortive) proposal to attest coloured women to take over much of the work done by black men in the women's camps, the creation of a women's MP corps was also motivated by the UDF's need to "protect" white women from the contemporary fears of the *swartgevaar* of black male sexuality. As such, part of the duties of this proposed outfit would be to take over guard duties that had until this point been performed by black men. While black men would still patrol "outside the camp fence, the women would be required to perform the same duties inside the

[200] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Behaviour on trains of members of WAAS and WAAF, 17/10/1941.
[201] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Behaviour on trains of members of WAAS and WAAF, 17/10/1941.
[202] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Employment of Women for Disciplinary Camp and Guard Duties, 17/10/1941.
[203] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Women Disciplinary Corps, 2/10/1941.
[204] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Untitled memo dated 17/1/1941.
[205] See: Angela Woollacott, "'Khaki Fever' and Its Control : Gender , Class , Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World", *Journal for Contemporary History* 29, no. 2 (1994), pp. 325–347; Sonya O. Rose, "Girls and GIs: Race, Sex, and Diplomacy in Second World War Britain", *The International History Review* 19, no. 1 (1997), pp. 146–160; Page Dougherty Delano, "Making Up for War: Sexuality and Citizenship in Wartime Culture", *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000), pp. 33–68; Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II"; Emma Vickers, "Infantile Desires and Perverted Practices: Disciplining Lesbianism in the WAAF and the ATS during the Second World War", *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 13, no. 4 (2009), pp. 431–441; Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
[206] An Afrikaans word literally translated as "loose girls".

fence".[207] Werdmuller was of the opinion that "this duty [could] be satisfactorily carried out by the women".[208]

The combination of practical matters and social anxieties meant that the creation of a Women's Disciplinary Corps (WDC) – as the women's MP corps was first titled – was soon endorsed. Despite discussions about the creation of a WDC beginning in 1941, it was only in April 1942 that the draft constitution of this service was drawn up.[209]

The Women's Auxiliary Military Police Corps (WAMPC), as it was officially to be known, was quickly staffed once its constitution had been ratified. Members of the WAMPC were drawn from attestees from the WAAS and WAAF. WAMPCs had to be between 21 and 45 years old, with a minimum of Standard 8 education, possess a "high standard of physical fitness" and "have no family ties, and be willing to go anywhere at any time".[210] The WAMPC would exercise disciplinary control over the women of the WADC both inside and outside the camps; patrolling "the streets, railway stations, visit places of amusement, etc.",[211] to ensure that the Springdoes were behaving "to the credit of the Army".[212] They would also serve as escorts to "lock-up facilities" for women brought up on AWOL or other charges.[213] Naturally, the WAMPC became unpopular amongst the women.[214] But a second issue also arose. With the mixing of people from different backgrounds, it became increasingly necessary to establish a unit which could navigate and mediate the social mixing of classes within the WADC, so synonymous with any wartime context. War, so argue historians B.A. Waites and Arthur Marwick, is a leveller of class barriers.[215] For the WADC, this ushered in a new set of social issues and a need to equalise the battlefield through educational programmes.

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[207] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Employment of Women for Disciplinary Camp and Guard Duties, 17/10/1941.
[208] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Employment of Women for Disciplinary Camp and Guard Duties, 17/10/1941.
[209] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Constitution of Women's Auxiliary Military Police Corps, 14/4/1942.
[210] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Women's Military Police Corps, 19/6/1942.
[211] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Employment of Women for Disciplinary Camp and Guard Duties, 17/10/1941.
[212] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Behaviour on Trains of Members of WAAS and WAAF, 17/10/1941.
[213] SANDFA, WADC Box 5, AG(W)F 15 WAMPC (Female Military Police), Escort Duties: WAMPC, 25/11/1942.
[214] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946,
[215] See: B.A. Waites, "The Effect of the First World Wat on Class and Status in England, 1910-20," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11 (1976), pp. 27–48; Arthur Marwick, "World War II and Social Class in Great Britain," in *Britain and the Netherlands*, ed. A.C Duke and C.A Tamse (Dordrecht: Springer, 1977), pp. 203–227.

### 2.3.2 Mother Hens: Welfare and Information Officers and Social Discipline

The large-scale inclusion of women into the male world of the military was not a simple task. New issues arose as the membership of the WADC grew and women from a variety of backgrounds suddenly found themselves flocked together. The core of the problem was summed-up as follows:

> Commanding Officers found themselves faced with cases of drunkenness, immorality and the use of bad language distressing to those forced to share bungalows with the offenders. Young women flocked in from the Platteland, who were completely ignorant of the conventions of city life, and unable to protect themselves against its dangers.[216]

These were problems rooted in social or class differences, not necessarily the wanton flouting of military rules. This fell beyond the duties of a WAMPC officer. By 1942, and in the context of increasing WADC membership beyond the confines of an all-middle-class cohort, a Welfare Office was created. WADC detachments would have a motherly figure whose duty it was to aid with the women's daily welfare. These officers found themselves "swamped with applications for assistance" ranging from issues of payment of dependant's allowance to counselling on marital problems created by the "disruptive effect of war on family life".[217] They offered courses on how to negotiate wartime life. Their numbers grew quickly, from 15 in September 1942 – when the first Welfare and Information Officer's (WIO) course was launched – to 23 by the following year.

During this period the duties of the Welfare and Information Service was also expanded to include education and the dissemination of information. Women were encouraged to further their education.[218] Members of the WADC were encouraged to take on courses at technical colleges or via distance learning or to take advantage of the cultural facilities available to them

[216] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946,
[217] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[218] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.

in the towns where they were serving. Furthermore, the women were encouraged to take up "useful" leisure time activities; knitting and sewing circles were started at a number of detachments, and dressmaking and leatherwork classes were offered.[219] By 1944, the Welfare and Information Service had grown to the point where it was under the direct control of the Adjutant General, the chief military administrative officer.[220] The call for these enlisted women to further their training, however, was part of a much larger campaign to mould good citizens for after the war.

### 2.3.3 The Army Education Scheme and the Creation of Good Citizens

As the war progressed, the South African military became ever more concerned about the educational and intellectual wellbeing of its troops in general. An educational scheme grew out of a broader need in the UDF to promote "correct" ideologies amongst an increasingly alienated and fractured fighting force. The citizenry had to be indoctrinated with the right liberal views come peace. To this end, educational lectures on a wide variety of topics were mandated. This took the form of the Army Education Scheme (AES).

Heading the AES initiative, Director of Military Intelligence E.G. Malherbe made the intention clear: it was to be an "enlightened form of paternalism which sought to educate white troops about the benefits of 'liberal democracy'".[221] In many ways, the AES endeavoured to reshape soldiers into a liberal, South Africanist mould.[222] With this end in mind, the AES sought to cultivate an intellectual "middle-ground" between English- and Afrikaans-speakers of all classes. It was thought by the command that this would create bonds of "political and cultural co-operation" between the moderates of these two groups and, in so doing, the appeal of fascist sympathies within the Afrikaner community could be diminished.[223] In order for the UDF to maintain a strong military culture it was necessary that all its members shared similar

[219] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[220] With the Welfare and Information Service falling under the control of the Adjutant General, the service became much more closely linked to the UDF. SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, 'History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services)', 1940-1946.
[221] Neil Roos, "The Second World War, the Army Education Scheme and the 'Discipline' of the White Poor in South Africa", *History of Education* 32, no. 6 (2003), p. 650.
[222] Neil Roos, "Education, Sex and Leisure: Ideology, Discipline and the Construction of Race among South African Servicemen during the Second World War," *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 3 (2011), p. 820.
[223] Cardo, "'Fighting a Worse Imperialism': White South African Loyalism and the Army Education Services (AES) during the Second World War", pp 141-142.

ways of "thinking, feeling, and acting".[224] The AES was to serve as an "equaliser" of class and language cleavages in the UDF.

What would become the AES was first conceived in September 1940 at a meeting of white liberals at the University of the Witwatersrand.[225] The main aim was to ensure that troops understood what it was for which they were fighting in order "to maintain morale" during desperate times.[226] A strong emphasis was placed on fighting *against* Nazism as opposed to fighting *for* the larger British Empire. A second aim was to reduce soldier apathy. One important lecture instructed soldiers on how to deal with boredom during leisure time. [227] But the soldiers also got to interact with each other and learn from each other. They would discuss and debate contemporary issues in a bid to pique their civilian interests. Broadly, the lectures were divided into "ideological" lectures – administrated by Malherbe and Professor Alfred Hoernlé (who headed the meeting first outlining the scheme) – and general lectures of "educational and recreational value".[228]

Although the wording of the official history of the AES includes both the men and women of the Defence Force, servicewomen were not initially included due to the scheme's resources being "taxed to the utmost by the demands of the Military Authorities for lectures".[229] When Major (Mrs) R. Lugtenburg – the first Officer Commanding of the WAAS – first came to hear of the AES, she contacted Hoernlé requesting that the WAAS also be included. Despite some initial obstacles, by April 1941 the lectures were soon extended to the WAAS and the WAAF.[230] When the WANS was created in 1943, its members also had the opportunity to take part in these lectures.[231]

The objectives of the expansion of educational lectures to women were:

> to keep members of the UDF abreast of war news,
> to teach them the objectives for which we are fighting,
> to explain the nature and value of democracy,
> to make them aware of the pitfalls of other systems of

[224] Cameron Fincher, "AIR between Forumsbetween Forums: What Is Organizational Culture?", *Research in Higher Education* 24, no. 3 (1986), p. 325.
[225] Roos, "The Second World War, the Army Education Scheme and the 'Discipline' of the White Poor in South Africa", p. 652.
[226] Roos, "Education, Sex and Leisure: Ideology, Discipline and the Construction of Race among South African Servicemen during the Second World War", p. 819.
[227] Roos, p. 819.
[228] SANDFA, WADC, Box 34, AS 13-1 Corr. RE Lectures, Letter to Major Lugtenburg, 22/11/1940.
[229] SANDFA, WADC, Box 34, AS 13-1 Corr. RE Lectures, Letter to Major Lugtenburg, 22/11/1940.
[230] SANDFA, WADC, Box 99, AS 104 Educational Services, Education Services, 28/4/1941.
[231] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, pp. 43-44.

> government,
> to give them some understanding and appreciation of South African problems, both local and national.[232]

These educational lectures were set out on a broad variety of themes, ranging from politics to science, history to hobbies, and "South African Problems" to the War itself. The Programme for Lectures to the Troops for June 1941, for example, lists lectures on over 200 distinct topics. These included several intended either primarily or exclusively for female audiences. "A Selection of Cats in Literature" and "Women in Euripides" (both falling under the theme of Language and Literature) and "Native Women in Urban Life" (South African Problems) were demarcated primarily for female audiences, while a talk on "The Political Responsibility of Women" (Political, Economic and Social Problems) delivered by Miss M. McLarty, the Headmistress of Jeppe High School for Girls, was for women only.[233] It was not only South African servicemen who had to be programmed as good citizen for peacetime. The servicewomen of the WADC also had to be moulded, almost indoctrinated, on how to be a responsible and informed white citizen.

The imposition of a military identity was key to the creation of servicewomen of the WADC. This took place and was monitored on three levels: regulation, education and socialisation.[234] The WAMPC regulated regimented military behaviour. The WAMPC was also set up to protect the WADC from sexual immorality. The regulation of social behaviour was also undertaken by the Welfare and Information Officers. "Mother hens" took care of the welfare of their charges and in so doing attempted to smooth out some of the class differences between servicewomen. While WIOs encouraged the women of the WADC to further their education and skills, the AES took this further. Soldiers had to be re-moulded as good citizens for after the war. While the women of the WADC were vaguely positioned in the UDF superstructure, the value of imparting similar skills and desired doctrines to them suggests that the UDF acknowledged, in some small way, the impact of these women and the role that they played not only in the war effort but also in preparation for life after war. Yet despite these

[232] SANDFA, WADC, Box 99, AS 104 Educational Services, Education and Information Officers for Women serving in the WADC, 11/6/1942.
[233] SANDFA, WADC, Box 99, AS 104 Educational Services, Programme for Lectures to the Troops, n.d.
[234] The military identity of the Springdoes was recreated on a fourth level – training. This took place within each branch of the WADC individually and served to recreate the women's identity not only as part of the military but more specifically as part of the male arm of service to which they were attached. Therefore, the recreation of military identity through training is discussed in the chapters dealing with the WAAS, WAAF, and WANS as individual units.

efforts at creating a broader UDF identity with a gendered slant for those members of the WADC, inequality continued to prevail.

## 2.4 (In)Difference to the (In)Equality: Inequalities between the WADC and the UDF

Servicemen and -women shared uniforms, ranks and models of behaviour. Through adopting military uniformity and conformity, the women of the WADC had begun to see themselves as part of the UDF. However, the WADC was consistently framed as a separate and secondary service to the fighting men of the UDF. Because of this, inequalities prevailed. The two most apparent of these were the exclusion of WADC servicewomen from the military definition of "citizen" and the discrepancies in pay rates between men and women in the South African military. Both of these issues were central to the protest launched by the League of Women Voters.

### 2.4.1 An Army of Civilians: The Exclusion of the WADC from the Military Definition of Citizenship

The South African Defence Act of 1912 defined a citizen as a *male* subject. Therefore, despite (white) women being enfranchised in 1930 and enjoying the privileges of political citizenship, in the eyes of the military women were not military citizens and could, as such, not belong to the UDF. The WADC was therefore described by Dorothy Kirby, the secretary of the League of Women Voters, as an army of civilians within the army proper.[235] The League sought redress to this continued legal and economic inequality of men and women by demanding the definition of citizen in the 1912 Act be changed.[236] As one rather salacious headline put it: "Women soldiers 'up in arms' over one word".[237]

The exclusion of women from definitions of citizenship has a long history. In the words of American historian Sonya Rose, women have "been depicted in political theory from the ancient world through the Enlightenment as unworthy or inappropriate to assume the rights and

[235] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 439 Women's Cuttings, Newspaper cutting: "Women soldiers 'up in arms' over one word", n.d.
[236] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 439 Women's Cuttings, Newspaper cutting: "Women in army not 'citizens'", n.d.
[237] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 439 Women's Cuttings, Newspaper cutting: "Women soldiers 'up in arms' over one word", n.d.

obligations of citizenship".[238] The historic denial of women's citizenship has had a far-reaching impact on their inclusion into nations' military bodies. One reason for their exclusion has been the close link between citizenship and military service; or, in other words "the soldier is a citizen and the citizen is a soldier".[239] In return for their military service, young men are granted "equal civic, political, and social rights".[240] Young women were not.

The exclusion of the WADC from full membership to the Union Defence Force caused considerable resentment on the part of the women. They felt that it "[debarred] them from the recognition to which they [were] entitled".[241] The disparity even reached the attention of the Director General of the Air Force, who, in 1941, argued that women in the WADC should be given equal recognition as "citizens" to the male officers whose places they filled.[242] Especially as this distinction had already been widened. With the 1919 amendment to the Act, the definition of military citizenship had been expanded to include (female) nurses who were members of the SAMNS as citizens.[243] Despite the efforts of the League of Women Voters and the Director General of the Air Force, no similar amendment was made in the Act to include members of the WADC. They remained an army of civilians.

### 2.4.2 The Brass Ceiling: Pay inequalities between the WADC and the UDF

A further inequality between South African servicemen and -women was economic, and perhaps less driven my military concerns regarding women's status as protected non-combatants but more so to prevailing expectations of women's work. Even before the outbreak of war, white South African women were economically disadvantaged in comparison to their male counterparts. The involvement of South African women in economic activity had grown in the inter-war years – rising to 28% in 1938 – and ever more women were integrated into

[238] Sonya O. Rose, "Sex , Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain," *The American Hstorical Review* 103, no. 4 (1998), p. 1162.
[239] O. Sasson-Levy, "Contradictory Consequences of Mandatory Conscription: The Case of Women Secretaries in the Israeli Military", *Gender and Society* 21, no. 4 (2007), p. 848.
[240] Orna Sasson-Levy and Sarit Amram-Katz, "Gender Integration in Israeli Officer Training: Degendering and Regendering the Military," *Signs* 33, no. 1 (2007), p. 109.
[241] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 439 Women's Cuttings, Newspaper cutting: "Women in army not 'citizens'", n.d.
[242] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Granting of King's Commissions to members of WADC, 6/6/1941.
[243] SANDFA, UWH, Box 261, 439 Women's Cuttings, Newspaper cutting: "Women soldiers 'up in arms' over one word", n.d.

previously male jobs in industry during the war.[244] However, despite this shift in women's employment, women were still paid much less than men in similar work. In wartime industry, for example, women were paid 75% of men's wages in 1941.[245] This was not limited to South Africa.

In Britain, for example, pay inequality at the time of World War II was also considered an acceptable norm. Despite the fact that, as argued by economic historian Ian Gazeley, monthly reports from the British Ministry of Labour during the war show that the overall gender pay inequality was substantially reduced until the advent of peace, women were still paid considerably less than men in similar posts.[246] There were also restrictions on British civilian women's salaries in state employment (capped at 80% of men's earnings). These were the target of several movements calling for "equal pay for equal work".[247] Pay inequality was not only a civilian matter. The female members of the ATS in Britain, for example, were paid two-thirds of what men of equal rank received.[248] The same was true for the servicewomen of the WADC. What this shows is that inequalities in pay rates were not unique to the South African defence forces of World War II, however, the reaction to this disparity perhaps was.

In May 1941, the South African League of Women Voters sent a letter to the office of the Prime Minister outlining their grievances of "the many inequalities of pay and opportunity suffered by women in the Defence Force […] based solely on the grounds of sex".[249] Their letter lists eight main points of inequality that they felt kept "many of the ablest women from placing their services at the disposal of the country at a time when every nerve should be strained to utilise the best brains and energies in the country".[250] These points of inequality were mainly centred on the issue of the massive pay discrepancies between male and female members of the Defence Force. The example is given of a female commanding officer of the WADC being paid the same as a Staff Sergeant of the SAAF or "less than half" of a male

[244] Louise Vincent, "Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000), p. 62. & Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa.", p. 1186.
[245] Clark, p. 1192.
[246] Momentum was lost for this campaign when peacetime came. See: Ian Gazeley, "The Levelling of Pay in Britain during the Second World War", *European Review of Economic History* 10, no. 2 (2006), p. 178.
[247] Harold L. Smith, "The Womanpower Problem In Britain During The Second World War", *The Historical Journal* 27, no. 4 (1984), p. 944.
[248] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 306.
[249] SANDFA, WADC, Box 4 DR(W)F 11-2 Points Raised by SA League of Women Voters, Letter to the Prime Minister, 15/3/1941.
[250] SANDFA, WADC, Box 4 DR(W)F 11-2 Points Raised by SA League of Women Voters, Letter to the Prime Minister, 15/3/1941.

Commanding officer's salary.[251] It was also pointed out that male officers were granted dependants' allowances on top of their basic salaries while women – whether married, single or widowed – were not.[252] Nor were these women given extra pay for proficiency as was standard for men in parallel units. This struggle was further compounded – so the League of Women Voters argued – by the fact that women (whatever their rank) had the added burden of domestic duties.

Despite having their cause championed by the League of Women Voters and the issues of unequal pay rates being taken up by the press, claims were made by the Defence Pay Investigation Committee that there was "no evidence that there is any serious complaint about the difference in [pay] rates as a whole".[253] The struggle was however taken up by the South African League of Women Voters.

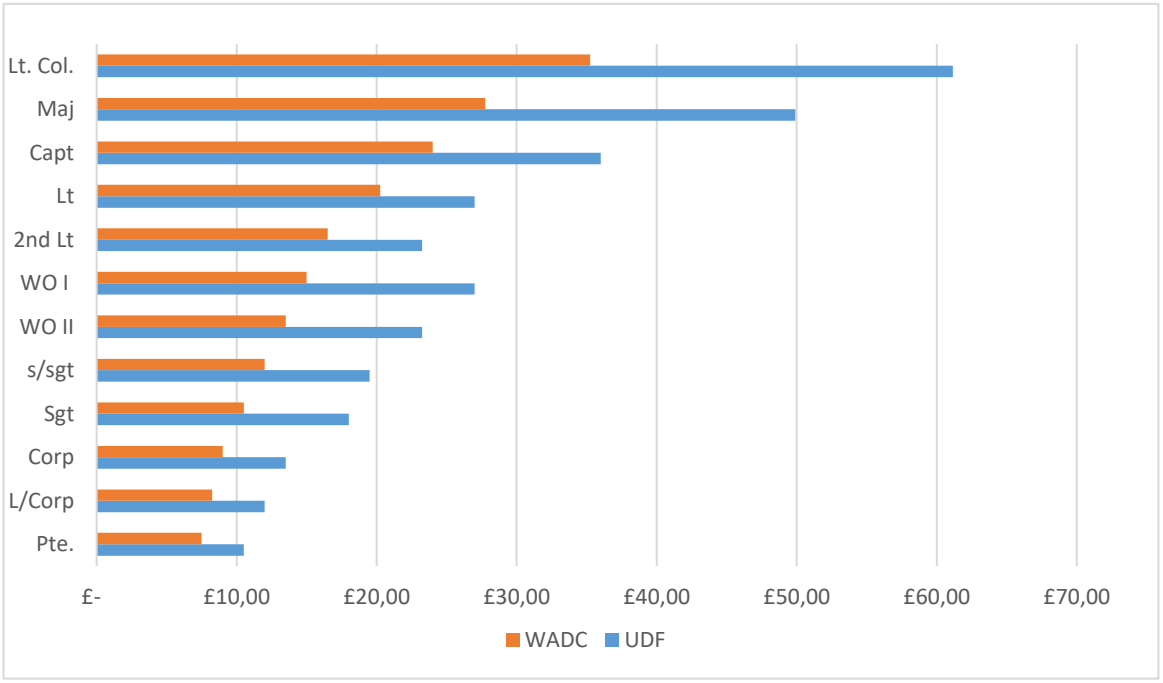


Figure 2.2: Proposed monthly pay rates in June 1942.

[251] It should be noted that a pay gap did not just exist between white female auxiliaries and male soldiers but also between black male auxiliaries and white male soldiers. Members of the NMC were paid 2/3d per day (raised to 2/6d per day in 1943) compared to white soldiers who earned 3/6d per day and could claim extra allowances (Marjana Roth Ma, "'If You Give Us Rights We Will Fight': Black Involvement in the Second World War", *South African History Journal* 15, no. 1 (1983), pp. 96-97).

[252] It should be noted that for the purposes of pay women in the WADC were always counted as "single" irrespective of their marital status or dependants. Married male soldiers were granted a monthly allotment.

[253] National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (NASAP), J.C. Smuts Papers, A1, Vol. 150/24, WAAS attached to SA Pay Corps: Extra Duty Allowance, 14/10/1941, p. 2.

The pay issue was not easily resolved due a "system so full of frills" that had been inherited from World War I and was "evolved from peacetime minds and processes".[254] The pay system used by the UDF was not only outdated but could not handle the growth in number of servicemen and –women whose pay had to be processed on a daily basis. By 1942, a change was necessary and the full UDF system of payment was extensively revised to address these unnecessary complexities and oddities such as a WADC Private being paid the same as a male Lance-Corporal. This does not, however, mean that the massive gendered pay discrepancies were rectified. Figure 2.2,[255] clearly shows a correlation between greater gender disparities the further up the ranking. This was standardised across the arms by 1942.

A further point which rankled the League was that members of the WADC were not conceded rail warrants to their home stations when proceeding on leave. Furthermore, this was a point of contention which also affected both WADC and NEAS members. The League was quick to fire on behalf of both marginalised groups:

> The juxtaposition of the two classes of exceptions to the general rule of railway concessions [is] to say the least of it offensive and very ill advised. It is difficult to find justification for the exclusion of the two worst paid sections of our Defence Forces from participation in such privileges.[257]

Unfortunately, this was a battle which they had to concede. Despite the women being re-moulded by the AES as good post-war citizens, the military definition of "citizen" remained elusive. Nor were the Springdoes given fair pay for their contributions to the war effort. These "privileges" would only be given to those who were soldiers; those who actively and officially participated in defending the nation through combat. On the one hand, certain indulgences allowed for women and Black men to be enlisted into the greater war effort. On the other, certain convenient restrictions were left in place to ensure that the military continued to work as a microcosm of South African society. Nevertheless, there were clear signs of resistance to the status quo. While some battles had been won, many ended in a stalemate.

[254] NASAP, J.C. Smuts Papers, A1, Vol. 150/50 Revision of UDF Rates of Pay, 30/6/1942.
[255] NASAP, J.C. Smuts Papers, A1, Vol. 150/50 Revision of UDF Rates of Pay, 30/6/1942.
[256] NASAP, J.C. Smuts Papers, A1, Vol. 150/50, Revision of UDF Rates of Pay, 30/6/1942.
[257] SANDFA, WADC, Box 4 DR(W)F 11-2 Points Raised by SA League of Women Voters, Letter to the Prime Minister, 15/3/1941.

## 2.5 Chapter Conclusion

The position of the WADC as part of the military culture of the UDF was complex due to the intersection of (white) South African society's concerns surrounding both race and gender and how these related to the use of women in the military. The WADC was created for the same reasons as other allied nations' women's auxiliary services: to replace men in non-combatant jobs with womanpower, thereby freeing men to join the fight.[258] As women brought into the masculine military, these World War II servicewomen were carefully defined as "auxiliary". This was done, both in South Africa and internationally, to preserve gender norms; particularly the division between female protected and male protector.[259] In the "social dance" of Higonnet and Higonnet's Double Helix, war may (temporarily) expand female roles but the dynamic of gender subordination maintains the social cleavage between men and women.[260] In South Africa a second social cleavage also had to be maintained within the military: racial divisions. In the context of the Union, the protector was defined not only as male but also as white, therefore, white women and black and coloured men could not be seen as more than non-combatant auxiliaries. This meant that, in the South African context, the combat taboo was both gendered and racial.

Comparable women's auxiliary services in Britain, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia functioned as independent services attached to the male arm of service they supported. The WADC brought the WAAS, WAAF and WANS together under one roof. It formed an umbrella of women's services in the same way that the UDF was an umbrella for the South African Army, Air Force and Naval Services. As a female side of the Union's military there were similarities between the men and women in terms of recruitment, rank and uniform. South African servicemen and –women conformed to military discipline and were moulded, by the AES, into good citizens for peacetime. Both the Springboks and Springdoes shared elements of the same military identity.

However, as these were women in the masculine milieu of the military, they were framed as auxiliaries. Because of this, there were significant differences in the placement of the women of the WADC within the structures of the UDF. This is most clear in terms of

[258] Nicholson, *Millions like Us: Women's Lives during the Second World War*, p. 86.
[259] Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States , Great Britain , Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 302 & Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", p. 15.
[260] Higonnet and Higonnet, "The Double Helix", p. 35.

limitations put in place to maintain gender norms. Unlike their male counterparts, the women had to secure permission from their husbands and provide childcare in order to attest; their roles as wives and mothers had to be secured before joining the male military world.

The ranks of the WADC were limited to keep their status as "protected" and not invert social power structures by allowing a servicewoman to hold authority over a serviceman. This is also reflected in the problems surrounding the badges of rank given to the WADC. High command at Headquarters saw this as a mistake. Women were only granted a place in the military temporarily; they were needed only for the duration of the crisis. Giving women the same "pips" as male soldiers, however, suggested otherwise. The impermanence of the WADC is also reflected in the servicemen's view of the women's uniforms as decorative rather than indication of military belonging.[261]

Discipline also took on a gendered component. The WAMPC was created to ward off the so-called immorality of men by searching and arresting women. The Welfare and Information Officers were charged with protecting against the "disruptive effect of war on family life",[262] which was not made a concern for the men. The servicewomen not only had to conform to military norms of behaviour but also to gendered social norms of behaviour.

These gendered differences in the placement of the WADC within the UDF reflect the idea that the military is a microcosm of society.[263] This meant that the inequality of women in civilian society was mirrored in the society of the military. The military definition of a "citizen" as outlined in the South African Defence Act of 1912 excluded women. Although military nurses had been included as citizens in the Act after their contributions in World War I, the women of the WADC were not. They were also, like civilian women, paid much less than their male counterparts doing the same work.

It is clear from their fight against having separate insignia from male members of the UDF and their campaigns against the inequalities of citizenship and pay that the women had a different perception of their military status than that of the command structures of the UDF. Overall, the women of the Corps were fiercely proud of their position as a part of the larger UDF. They considered themselves as soldiers first; in contrast to the men of the UDF who saw them primarily as "pretty" women. This shows resistance, on the part of the Springdoes, to the

[261] Joseph and Alex, "The Uniform : A Sociological Perspective", p. 719.
[262] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAS, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[263] Van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African Armed Forces, an Historical Perspective", p. 2.

limited conditions of their place in the military as defined by the military elite. It also demonstrated the presence of hierarchies of discrimination in the South African context: gender and race.

Due to the WADC being framed as an *auxiliary* service, their military service was not officially given equal recognition to that of their male counterparts in the UDF, despite their undeniable contributions. This is clear when looking at the WADC as a whole in relation to the UDF as a whole. However, the WADC consisted of three distinct branches: the WAAS, WAAF and WANS. While the WADC as a whole was embedded in the military culture of the UDF, its component branches were also embedded in the military (sub)cultures of the South African Army, SAAF and SANF. This influenced the organisational structure and expectations of their female counterparts, as can be seen in the different uniform worn by the WANS. Therefore, in order to fully understand how auxiliary the Springdoes were, it is necessary to examine the creation, organisational structure, training and deployment of the WAAS, WAAF, and WANS as individual women's auxiliary services.

# Chapter 3: More than just Pretty Girls and Paperclips: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service, 1940-1945

In 1940, the South African Women's Auxiliary Army Service was founded. Broadly, the aim of this corps was to integrate women into various non-combatant positions in the South African Army, so that male soldiers could be freed to join the fight. And, employed in jobs ranging from typist to despatch rider, many did.

There is an existing literature regarding white women's place in South Africa's World War II effort; be it through the WADC as an umbrella organisation or its specific component units like the Women's Auxiliary Army Service (WAAS). This is particularly evident in comparison to comparable women's army auxiliary services in other allied nations.[1] Within the literature, Chetty's work again must be highlighted as an important contribution to our existing knowledge.[2] Her work gives valuable insight into how women were represented as auxiliaries in terms of gendered norms in wartime propaganda. However, this is discussed by simultaneously looking at the WAAS, WAAF and the civilian SAWAS and does not investigate the WAAS as a unique unit with a palpable divisional identity. One text that does investigate the WAAS as a distinct military unit is a Master's thesis by S.M. Welding.[3] Here she investigates the nature and scope of the work done by the WAAS. She concludes that women's participation in the WAAS opened the door for women's later participation in the South African military. However, due to the lack of secondary sources available at the time the thesis was written about South African women's participation in World War II in isolation, as Welding notes herself. The study is largely descriptive rather than analytical.[4]

[1] Gerard J. De Groot, "'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War", *History* 82, no. 265 (1997), pp. 73–92; Yashila Permeswaran, "Women's Army Auxiliary Corps: A Compromise to Overcome the Conflict of Women Serving in the Army", *The History Teacher* 42, no. 1 (2008), pp. 95–111; Jennifer Nichol Stewart, "Wacky Times: An Analysis of the WAC in World War II and Its Effects on Women", *International Social Science Review* 75, no. 1 (2000), pp. 26–37; Melissa Ziobro, "Skirted Soldiers: The Women's Army Corps and Gender Integration of the U.S. Army", *On Point* 17, no. 4 (2012), pp. 36–43.

[2] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945" (PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006).

[3] Susanna Maria Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog" (Master's thesis, University of Pretoria, 1990).

[4] Welding, "Voorwoord", n.p.

Although "war has traditionally been viewed as a phenomenon which concerns only men, since it is usually only men who bear arms and fight",[5] some of the women in the WAAS were able to overcome the gendered component of the combat taboo through their military service.[6] An analysis of the ways in which the women of the WAAS moved beyond the auxiliary stage and subverted the combat taboo in various ways will also help to establish if they were simply "auxiliaries" to the fighting men of the UDF. This will be done by exploring the work undertaken by the WAAS in two types of work perceived to either be more in line with masculine or feminine norms of the time; and environments that were either physically closer to, or further from, a combat zone.

In this chapter, women's military roles (both auxiliary and beyond) will be explored by discussing the creation of the WAAS before outlining the organisational structure of the WAAS. This will serve to distinguish the ways in which the WAAS was run as a distinctly military body and how the service resembled that of the army under the larger UDF structure. From this, how the women adapted to this military identity, will be investigated. The scope of the training and courses provided for women in the WAAS will be discussed to show how these women were trained for their wartime service. Finally, deployment of WAAS members will be studied: firstly, as a mainly auxiliary body, and secondly in terms of their movement beyond the auxiliary. It will be argued that the status of the WAAS as purely auxiliary was shaped by the specific ways in which this service developed and that, through the use of Waasies in Anti-Aircraft Batteries, some members were able to move beyond the auxiliary and closer to the realm of combatant.

## 3.1 A Few Good (Wo)Men: Creation of the WAAS:

The WAAS was created and administrated as a unique female military organisation to cater for the manpower shortage in the South African Army. It was one of the first branches of the WADC to come into being in 1940. In order to better understand the contributions of the Waasies (as the women who joined the WAAS were popularly known) to the South African war effort, it is crucial to first look at how the WAAS itself was established. This section will,

[5] Françoise Thébaud, "Understanding Twentieth-Century Wars through Women and Gender Forty Years of Historiography", *Clio*, no. 39 (2014), p. 153.
[6] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), p. 32.

therefore, investigate the motives for creating a female, auxiliary section for the South African Army, and its growth out of the South African Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS).

### 3.1.1 The Cinderellas of the War Effort: The South African Women's Auxiliary Service

The SAWAS was founded shortly before the outbreak of the War. The impetus behind the creation of SAWAS came from a suggestion by General J.J. Collyer – Smut's military secretary – in 1938 that a women's service legion be established in South Africa. Building on this proposal, Minister of Defence, Oswald Pirrow, called for all existing women's organisations that were geared towards the coming war effort be brought together under one umbrella: the South African Women's Auxiliary Service.[7] According to South African historian John Lambert, these included: "British Empire Service League, the Navy League Wartime Workers, Sons of England Women's Association, the Victoria League and numerous Jewish women's organisations."[8] The newly minted SAWAS would be under the direction of the Department of Defence for the duration of the War and fell under the guidance of the Director of Recruiting.[9] Despite its falling under the Department of Defence – and the military posturing of its regulations[10] – SAWAS was a civilian outfit. According to its constitution, SAWAS would be "a national, non-sectarian, non-political organization [*sic.*] of European women prepared to offer their services to their country at all times and especially in periods of stress or emergency".[11]

The initial growth of SAWAS was slow. At the beginning of the war, the Women's Auxiliary Service only counted some 7 000 members.[12] According to the official history of SAWAS, it took "the serious events of the war in 1940 to rouse a proper enthusiasm for the organisation and a conception of what it might become in a time of national emergency".[13] Once this "proper enthusiasm" had been roused, the organisation grew quickly and took on a

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[7] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 20, SAWAS Compiled by I.M Schonland, 1954.
[8] John Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 1 (2008), p. 68.
[9] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 20, SAWAS Compiled by I.M Schonland, 1954.
[10] As an organisation SAWAS used many symbols and military aspects, despite their civilian status: SAWAS was divided into 13 "Commands"; the internal hierarchy used rank structures to indicate seniority, with "Provincial Commandants" at the head of the various Commands. They also created their own uniforms and rank insignia. Gwen Hewitt, *Womanhood at War: The Stoy of SAWAS* (Johannesburg: Frier & Munro, n.d.), p. 35; Lucy Bean, *Strangers in Our Midst* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1970), p. 25.
[11] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 20, SAWAS Compiled by I.M Schonland. 1954.
[12] Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", p. 68.
[13] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 20, SAWAS Compiled by I.M Schonland, 1954.

wide variety of activities.[14] The SAWAS was responsible for recruitment for the WAAS. At the time, however, their most recognised ventures centred on raising funds for the war effort. Between 1940 and 1947, the women of SAWAS raised a grand total of £ 1 811 539/14s/5d[15] for war funds, local charities, materials and wool to make up garments for the troops, and for the National War Memorial Health Fund.[16]

Perhaps the most memorable activities of SAWAS – at least for South African, British and Commonwealth troops – was its morale boosting efforts. Not only did SAWAS raise funds for the war effort but they also ran a number of "soldiers' clubs, canteens, convalescent homes and hostels".[17] Many of their activities in this vein were firmly centred around the traditional role of women in wartime as caregivers and bastions of moral support for the fighting men; they knitted socks, scarves and jerseys, and made up food and gift parcels for South African troops and for Allied troops passing though South African ports. These were affectionately known as "Glory Bags".[18] Part of this morale boosting mission was also organising accommodation and recreation for troops passing through the ports or on leave in South Africa. In the words of Lucy Bean – a journalist at the Cape Argus and one of the founders of SAWAS – they ensured that the soldiers could relax at dances and other events surrounded by "pretty girls and beer".[19]

For some SAWAS members, this was not enough. Through their determination, SAWAS volunteers began to agitate for opportunities for "training besides determining the various kinds of service that women would be able to render".[20] On 29 May 1940, the announcement was made:

> It has been decided to establish MT [Motor Transport] Companies of the Women's Army Auxiliary Service for whole-time service immediately. Women are to be enrolled to replace men drivers at home stations wherever possible to release the

[14] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 20, SAWAS Compiled by I.M Schonland, 1954.
[15] For comparison, this would be worth over £ 100 500 000 (or almost R 1.9 billion) in terms of buying power, adjusted for inflation.
[16] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 20, SAWAS Compiled by I.M Schonland, 1954.
[17] Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", p. 68.
[18] Lambert, p. 69.
[19] Bean, *Strangers in Our Midst*, p. 49.
[20] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 467.

latter for service.[21]

Members of SAWAS were drawn to serve in full-time positions as MT Drivers in May 1940. These were not yet *military* women: they were civilians providing a service for the army. This was simply an extension of the role of SAWAS as a civilian organisation; the Women's Auxiliary Army Service did not yet officially exist. Their roles, however, resembled those perfomed by women under the WAAS military branding.

### 3.1.2 From Aprons to Army: The Development of WAAS from SAWAS in May 1940

From the WAAS's small-scale beginning as MT Drivers, the need to create a dedicated women's auxiliary army service grew. Those women who joined the first MT Unit would become the first full-time serving members of the WAAS. The duties of the service soon grew to include clerical work to further aid the UDF's manpower potential. From these simple beginnings the use of womanpower in the UDF steadily expanded to include a range of activities.


Figure 3.1: Cap Badge of the WAAS

The original core services of the WAAS are represented in the design of their cap badge: signallers, clerks, munition workers, Motor Transport drivers, and cooks (Figure 3.1).[22] The emblems show: a spatula (cooks); an open book (clerks); a lorry (drivers); the messenger god Mercury (signallers); and two cartridges (munitions). As the needs of the South African military changed over the course of the war so did the demands made on the women of this service. By 1943, for example, when an updated version of the WADC Recruiting Information was published, the potential jobs open to members of the WAAS numbered some 40 distinct trades.[23] This shows that the WAAS did not emerge fully formed

[21] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 467. Before the WADC was officially created through section two of the War Measures Act (Act No. 13 of 1940), the idea of a women's corps in South Africa was briefly referred to as the Women's Army Auxiliary Service.
[22] SANDFA, image taken from "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 468.
[23] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 63 Women's Units Rates of Pay, WADC recruiting information, 1943.

as an auxiliary women's service for the South African Army. Rather it grew out of a civilian women's organisation and slowly took shape as a military body.

The WAAS was officially gazetted on 29 May 1940,[24] and on 7 June 1940 the first female recruits officially joined the Women's Auxiliary Army Service.[25] In the narrative of the WAAS Welfare and Information Service written for the Union War Histories Section – a body created by the Department of Defence in 1943 to oversee the recording of South Africa's World War II history[26] – any of the first recruits to the WAAS were described as "people of some means and good educational standards whose primary motive in attesting was to serve the country in a time of crisis".[27] However, over the course of the Service's existence a multitude of (white) women from different backgrounds would join the WAAS.[28] The recruitment criteria for the WAAS were broad and were adapted over the course of the War to better suit the needs of both the WADC and the UDF.[29] This means that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what type of woman was likely to join the WAAS. However, as with the WADC as a whole, the WAAS membership seems to have consisted of mainly middle-class white women, because of its origin in the predominantly middle-class SAWAS, with a balance between English and Afrikaans-speakers likely on par with that of the larger UDF.[30]

While the first batch of recruits were drawn directly from SAWAS, there were a number of other paths that women followed into the WAAS. Much like boys following fathers or older brothers to war, many Waasies found themselves in uniform for much the same reasons. Sisters and friends signed up together.[31] Mary Benson, for example, signed up – in August 1941 – alongside two girlfriends.[32] As noted by Lambert: "For young men, a desire for […]

[24] Susanna Maria Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", (Master's thesis, University of Pretoria, 1990). p. 23.
[25] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[26] David Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 40, no. 3 (2013), pp. 288-289.
[27] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations, History of WAAS Welfare (Information Services), 1940-1946.
[28] As enlistment numbers increased so did the class, language and educational backgrounds of the WAAS change, however, it is difficult to accurately gauge this shift.
[29] The recruitment criteria for the WADC, and differences between the individual branches are detailed in Chapter 2.
[30] Demographics in terms of language are discussed in Chapter 2.
[31] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", pp. 282-283.
[32] Mary Benson, *A Far Cry: The Making of a South African* (Pretoria: Sigma Press, 1996), p. 22.

companionship or the succumbing to peer pressure cannot be ruled out".[33] The same must have been true for young women.

Recruiting drives for the WAAS were run by the SAWAS. It was from these campaigns that many recruits were drawn. In addition, propaganda campaigns were run that appealed to a sense of duty or the heroines of the past. By the time of the recruiting crisis, this shifted. The practical opportunities for joining the WAAS overshadowed the previous call to re-enact the heroic deeds of the strong white women of the past. An article published in *The Star* in July 1942, at the height of the recruiting crisis experienced by the UDF, for example, placed emphasis on the fact that a variety of positions in the WAAS were available immediately; suitable for any aptitude, interest or level of education.[34] It goes further to make a point of the money that could be earned through war work:

> With free quarters and board and free uniform a woman on full-time service, living in camp, has nearly £7 a month for personal expenses and, since uniform replacements can be obtained very cheaply […] and women on full-time service are able to obtain specially cheap railway fares, this sum should go as far as three times as large a salary earned in civil employment in town.[35]

Clearly economic enticements – women being able to bring home their own pay (some for the first time) while husbands, fathers or other breadwinners were away at the front – was seen as a large draw for potential recruits. This, in some ways, mirrors historian Albert Grundlingh's assertion that many men – particularly those from poorer Afrikaner backgrounds – found their way into military service during World War II out of economic motivations.[36] Joining the UDF was presented as an almost guaranteed salary, particularly for those with limited skills. In addition, life in the military was also presented as providing better economic opportunities, what with its military benefits of accommodation and reduced railway fares. Undoubtedly these arguments resurfaced in conversations around equal pay and railway passes, discussed in Chapter 2.

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[33] Lambert, "'Their Finest Hour?' English-Speaking South Africans and World War II", p. 72.
[34] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 210 South African Women's Part in the War, Newspaper cutting: 'Opportunities for Women', *The Star*, 8/7/1942.
[35] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 210 South African Women's Part in the War, Newspaper cutting: 'Opportunities for Women', *The Star*, 8/7/1942.
[36] Albert Grundlingh, "The King's Afrikaners ? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa ' s Defence Force during the Second World War , 1939-45", *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 3 (1999), p. 360.

This tactic was necessary – if not wholly effective – as there was a vacuum in the job market created by the war.[37] With men leaving for war, white women filled their civilian jobs. This meant that qualified women could, in essence, take their pick of available positions and even unqualified women could find work easily.[38] As pointed out in Chapter 2, civilian jobs paid better on paper than the UDF. This meant that many women who would otherwise have joined the WAAS, chose civilian employment over military employment out of arguably skewed financial considerations. The combination of these factors meant that many women who could otherwise have joined the WAAS rather chose civilian jobs.[39] Perhaps the perks of being in military service could not outweigh the sacrifices that would come with belonging to a military structure. It should also be noted that women themselves may very well have had difficulty overcoming generations of patriarchal rhetoric which inadvertently led them to uphold their own "brass ceilings".

Despite social anxieties surrounding the incorporation of women into the UDF, it is clear, from looking at the creation of the WAAS, that many white South African women were determined to serve the war effort. It was through this determination that the civilian SAWAS developed into the military WAAS.

As in many other nations who drew women into their armed services during World War II, the main argument for the integration of women into the UDF was to release men in non-combatant positions so that these men could join the fight. This reasoning is outlined in the Emergency Regulations that officially created the WADC.[40] The WAAS – as a distinct leg of the WADC – was no different. This is reflected in the detachment requirements. In 1941, for example, UDF regiments were asked to supply their requirements for WAAS details, amongst the most common reasons given by the (male) commanding officers for needing more WAAS members was "to replace male personnel".[41]

The same reasoning was used in Britain with the creation of the ATS.[42] The discussions surrounding the creation of a women's reserve in the immediate pre-war years were focussed

[37] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 32.
[38] Welding, p. 32.
[39] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Memorandum: Formation of a Women's ACF Unit, 4/12/1941.
[40] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.
[41] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F 9-4 WAAS Requirements, WAAS requirements, 23/9/1941.
[42] The ATS was, in many ways, a revival of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps which had been created during World War I. So too were the WRNS and the British WAAF evolutions of their World War I originators. This is not, however, to say that the revival process was a simpe one. For more detail, see: Jeremy A. Crang, "The Revival of the British Women's Auxiliary Services in the Late Nineteen-Thirties," *Historical Research* 83, no. 220 (2010):

on the need to make the most efficient use of available womanpower; having seen the advantages to using women auxiliaries during World War I. It was in this context that Leslie Hore-Belisha – the British Secretary for War – stated that women should be marshalled into a reserve force "so that on the outbreak of hostilities they can release individuals, and even the bulk of certain units, for inclusion in active formations".[43]

Despite the fact that the British military depended on its use of womanpower, women were not integrated into the ranks of the Army;[44] as they more closely were in South Africa. In the US, the WAAC was similarly established with the purpose of "making available to the national defence the knowledge, skill, and special training of the women of the nation" after the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941.[45] Clearly, therefore, South Africa was not alone in making use of its womanpower in the army in order to free men to fight.

Nor was South Africa alone in keeping their army women in the position of auxiliaries. In Britain, for example, it was deeply felt that "'a woman will *be* a woman' – that women were essentially handmaidens, auxiliaries, a back-up force", and so only suited to pushing paperclips in the offices of ranking men.[46] Despite the efforts of campaigners – such as the Labour MP Edith Summerskill who felt that women should no longer be seen as "weak, gentle creatures who must be protected"[47] but should be allowed to defend themselves and their country – it was held that any deviation from respectable, safe and, above all, feminine jobs in the non-combatant sectors of the military would lead to the downfall of gendered work, and with it, society. Although this may sound hyperbolic, the same fears about the use of women in the military were shared by the Americans. The use of women in the US army was seen as a simple waste of time. One Colonel stated that "We had a war to fight, war was man's business. Women would only clutter it up".[48] When the WAAC was founded, it was on the condition that it remain a "separate, supplementary, parallel adjunct" of the military.[49]

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343–57; Jeremy A. Crang, *Sisters in Arms: Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[43] Crang, *Sisters in Arms: Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p. 14.

[44] Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 9, no. 2 (2000), p. 232.

[45] Permeswaran, "The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps : A Compromise to Overcome the Conflict of Women Serving in the Army", p. 97.

[46] Virginia Nicholson, *Millions like Us: Women's Lives during the Second World War* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 111.

[47] Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, "Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War", p. 234.

[48] Permeswaran, "The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps : A Compromise to Overcome the Conflict of Women Serving in the Army", p. 96.

[49] Permeswaran, p. 97.

In South Africa similar anxieties about women's service with the Army held fast. If they were not limited to auxiliary, non-combatant jobs, it was feared that any deviation from this *raison d'être* would "completely upset our military and social structure".[50] Women in the WAAS were to remain supplementary. In addition to their (official) stature as supplementary to military men, it was equally crucial that the women of the newly formed WAAS retain their femininity at all costs. They were women *in* the army, but not *of* the army: they could not become "true" soldiers.

## 3.2 WAAS as a Military Unit: Organisational Structure

Although the WAAS grew from a civilian organisation, the WAAS was first and foremost, a military body. Despite the placement of these women's role as strictly "auxiliary", the WAAS was, nevertheless, part of the UDF. It is, therefore, necessary to look at how the WAAS was structured as a military unit. This will be done by examining the organisational and command structure of the WAAS as a military unit and how these were used to reinforce and maintain pre-war gender dynamics.

The draft constitution for the WAAS was drawn up in December of 1940. Here the basic organisational structure and regulations for the Service was outlined. It was decided that the WAAS would "consist of a Headquarters staff and officers and other ranks as may be required for employment in posts on authorised establishments of units of the UDF, other than the SAAF [South African Air Force]".[51] Initially one command was established in each province of the Cape Province, Natal and Free State.[52] Two commands would be necessary in the Transvaal; one in command of the Transvaal and Voortrekkerhoogte, and the other for command of Witwatersrand.[53] The division of command between a Command Headquarters and a South African Headquarters was in order to allow for a "systematic method of control

[50] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941, p. 3.
[51] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940. Members of the WAAF would take on similar employment at establishments of the SAAF, as discussed in Chapter 4.
[52] SANDFA, WADC, Box 89, AS 75 Organisation - WAAS (SA), Provisional War Establishment WAAS (SA), n.d.
[53] SANDFA, WADC, Box 89, AS 75 Organisation - WAAS (SA), Provisional War Establishment WAAS (SA), n.d.

and regimental training of all members of the whole organisation".[54] As a military corps, the WAAS was further divided into sections, detachments and companies, along much the same lines as their male counterparts.[55] As the war progressed and more womanpower was needed to fulfil the duties of the WAAS, ever more detachments were established in towns and on military bases around the country.

In addition to this basic military administrative structure, the WAAS shared another characteristic with their male counterparts in the UDF: the structure of command. The WAAS as a part of the larger WADC fell under the command of the Adjutant General.[56] Major (Mrs.) R. Lugtenburg was the first Officer Commanding (OC) of the WAAS.

The future Major Lugtenburg was born Reintje Douma on 20 March 1895 in Sneek in the Netherlands and immigrated to South Africa as a child.[57] She matriculated from Pretoria Girls' High School and, by 1916, had completed ber Bachelor's degree and a Higher Education Diploma at the Transvaal University Colledge.[58] Before her marriage to Anthony Lugtenburg, who she had met at university, she worked as a teacher in Potchefstroom and at her *alma mater* Pretoria Girls' High School. After her marriage, Lugtenburg became a proponent for education and was an active member of a number of women's organisations where she held "many positions of trust in public welfare life in Pretoria".[59] She was elected as the first president of the League of Women Voters in 1933, the President of the Pretoria branch of the South African Association of University Women (elected in 1936) and President of the Pretoria Branch of the National Council of Women[60] (elected in January 1939).[61]

In the uncertain years leading up to the official declaration of war in 1939, Lugtenburg added a new focus to her activism: preparing for the coming conflict. Alongside Lucy Bean, Lugtenburg was one of the founding members of the SAWAS. Evidently she found her "previous experience and knowledge of women's organisations useful; not only from the point

[54] SANDFA, WADC, Box 89, AS 75 Organisation - WAAS (SA), Provisional War Establishment WAAS (SA), n.d.
[55] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[56] A senior administrative post charged with duties related to personnel.
[57] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 24.
[58] "Cape University Results Transvaal Winners of Degrees", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 8/2/1916. The Transvaal University Colledge is now known as the University of Pretoria.
[59] "People in the Capital Week by Week by AGS", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 14/6/1940.
[60] "People in the Capital Week by Week by AGS", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 26/1/1940.
[61] "People in the Capital Week by Week by AGS", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 13/1/1939

of view of organisation but in making contacts" [62] and quickly rose to the "rank" of Provincial Commandant of the Transvaal.

On 10 June 1940, Lugtenburg and 39 other SAWAS members became the first officers of the WAAS. The newly created Major Lugtenburg's position as Provincial Commandant and her "efficiency [had] been proved" through her previous experience as chairwoman of various organisations meant that she had the best qualifications to take over the role of OC of the newly formed WAAS.[63] Her personality was also a boon to her leadership. Shortly after the creation of the WAAS, Lugtenburg was described in the social pages of the *Rand Daily Mail* as being "completely bilingual and with a grasp of the problems on both the dominating races in South Africa [Afrikaners and English-speaking white South Africans], as well as wide sympathy for the problems of people of other lands Mrs Lugtenburg [was] definitely the right woman to be entrusted with so important a command as that of the new women's forces to be established'.[64] In June 1941, on the anniversary of WAAS's existence, Lugtenburg's appointment was described in the *Rand Daily Mail* as "a wise move […] since educationally and temperamentally she is suited to be a leader and organiser of women".[65]

As the leader and organiser of Army women, Lugtenburg was responsible for overseeing overall administration of the corps, issuing command orders, conducting information programmes, and liaising with civilian bodies for co-operation. In short, her position was to direct the top level of WAAS administration and to take charge of key decisions about recruiting, uniforms, courses and other issues that would allow the WAAS to function smoothly as a military corps before these orders would be passed down to the next level of WAAS command. Lugtenburg retired from this post in June 1942, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.[66]

Although Lugtenburg was technically the head of the WAAS, due to the UDF's restrictions on women holding authority over men, ultimate authority was relegated to a male member of the UDF. Colonel GCG Werdmuller was the Administrative Head of the WAAS and it was his responsibility to represent the WAAS to the Adjutant General.[67] From 1942

[62] "People in the Capital Week by Week by AGS", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 26/1/1940.
[63] "People in the Capital Week by Week by AGS", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 14/6/1940.
[64] "People in the Capital Week by Week by AGS", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 14/6/1940. She was, in fact, fluent in three languages: English, Afrikaans and Dutch.
[65] "People in the Capital Week by Week by AGS", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 20/6/1941.
[66] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 467.
[67] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 24.

onwards, after Lugtenburg's retirement, Werdmuller took over command of the WAAS. He also held the position of Director of Recruiting. It should, however, be noted that, despite his position as the commanding officer of the WAAS, Werdmuller was not given the title of Officer Commanding WAAS. Instead this title was abolished.[68] Werdmuller's second-in-command over the WAAS was, however, always a female Lieutenant-Colonel.

Although the head of the Service was a man for the second half of the War, this seems to have had little impact on the daily administration of the women's service. The reactions of WAAS members themselves, however, points to a separate issue. According to Welding, Werdmuller was not a popular figure among the women of the WADC. He and Lugtenburg had reportedly not gotten along. This observation was shared by many other members of the WADC. This is most clear in Lt.-Col. Doreen Dunning's – Lugtenburg's equivalent in the WAAF – description of Werdmuller as "the laughing stock of women in the army".[69]

Despite Werdmuller's poor reception by the Waasies, the daily administration of the WAAS still was carried out by the women of WAAS Headquarters in Pretoria. Furthermore, each section, detachment or company was headed by a lead officer in charge. These female lead officers were in charge of overseeing the "efficiency, discipline, well-being and training (where practicable) of all ranks of their detachment".[70] She was in turn responsible to the OC of the specific military unit to which the WAAS detachment was stationed, depending on their respective rank or sex.[71] For example, a lead officer would have control over her detachment, while OC of the unit to which the detachment was seconded (usually a male officer) held command over the lead officer.

This potentially confusing order of command stemmed from a desire to maintain pre-war gender dynamics. As described by a specialist in women's war history, Françoise Thébaud:

> Female roles are always subordinate to masculine ones, in spite of public disagreement about how their experiences, for example the mobilization of women into war factories and their participation in resistance, are to be understood. Sexual identities may take a battering but society's self-image remains firmly

[68] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 38.
[69] Welding, p. 38.
[70] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[71] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence. Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.

buttressed by the notion of difference between the sexes.[72]

In the context of (white) South Africa during World War II, this buttressing meant that military women (no matter their rank) had to come second to their male counterparts to maintain the position in the Double Helix of women in the UDF as auxiliaries to the men who did the fighting.[73] In relative terms the rank structure of the WAAS was directly based on that used by the (male) Army, however, it is clear that certain key differences were held in order to maintain the WAAS's position as a separate and secondary service.

This was not, however, how the women of the WAAS necessarily perceived themselves.

## 3.3 Military Identity

Although, as outlined above, the basic organisational structure of the WAAS was quite similar to that of the male South African Army, this was not enough to truly (re)create this women's service as a "real" military body. In order for the women of the WAAS to fully become members of South Africa's defence forces – albeit as auxiliaries – they not only had to take on the outward structures and discipline of the UDF but also had to take on an internal military identity. For the WAAS, this recreation of military identity was enforced through the adoption of uniforms and barrack life. Through this, they began to see themselves as "military". However, this perception was not necessarily shared by those inside or outside the women's service.

[72] Thébaud, "Understanding Twentieth-Century Wars through Women and Gender Forty Years of Historiography", p. 162.
[73] Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 34-36.

### 3.3.1 A Uniform Destroys all a Girl's Individuality: Adopting and Adapting Military Identity as Servicewomen in the WAAS

As outlined in Chapter 2, the creation of correct military identity is often first achieved through the homogenisation of appearance – through the donning of uniform. The women of the WAAS recognised that, through their uniforms, they were becoming homogenised. The cartoon shown in Figure 3.2 drawn by an unacknowledged Waasie for the self-published magazine *Look in!*,[74] shows a group of identical WAAS in uniform who can only be differentiated by what is underneath – their legs and underwear. The caption given reinforces the message: "Our uniform destroys all a girl's individuality".[75] Clearly, through this humorous lens, the cartoonist realises that through their uniform, she and her compatriots have been recreated as a unit; they are no longer individuals but components of the workings of the UDF. The uniform also masks any physical differences and this is depicted by the intricate detail given to portraying legs of varying types and shapes. Very naughtily, there are a variety of undergarments which are sketched, suggesting a display of individuality which can go unregulated if kept "out of sight". Much like Muriel Gane Pushman, the British WAAF officer who chose to wear delicate civilian underwear, these Waasies counteracted the masculinity and conformity of their uniform by preserving "satin and lace" underneath.[76] This caricature thus encapsulates the ironies of wearing a uniform and suggests that underneath the façade, feminine individuality could be maintained. One could also read this as an act of defiance against the rigid military regulations.

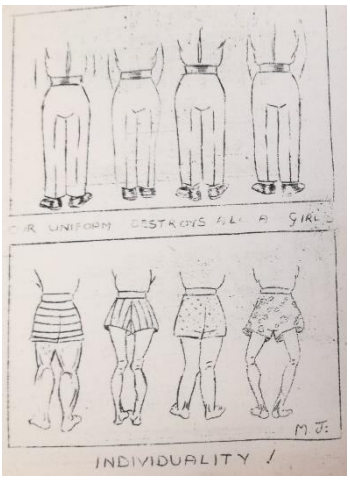


Figure 3.2: "Our uniform destroys all a girl's individuality!"

While the WAAS was run as a part of the UDF and the servicewomen of the WAAS were given rank and uniform, there was one aspect of daily military life that was not equally applied to the Waasies: servicewomen were not compelled to live in barracks. The socialisation process would thus be interrupted when these women returned to their abodes. Members of the WAAS who were married or who had young dependents were permitted to live at home,

[74] SANDFA, Pamphlets WW2: Woman's contribution, Cartoon: "A uniform destroys a girl's individuality" taken from *Look in!* December 1943, p. 34.
[75] SANDFA, Pamphlets WW2: Woman's contribution, Cartoon: "A uniform destroys a girl's individuality" taken from *Look in!* December 1943, p. 34.
[76] Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p. 114.

provided they lived close to where they were stationed. This was, in part, a practical differentiation as accommodation for military women was difficult to arrange. Unlike accommodation for the men of the South African Army – where barracks were already established – WAAS accommodation had to be either built from scratch or suitable residential buildings had to be rented at extra expense to the UDF.

For those who did live in barracks, it was likened to boarding school by many servicewomen due to the restrictions placed on the women's movements and the strict supervision that they had to endure.[77] This is unsurprising. Almost every aspect of these women's lives was dictated: from mealtimes to daily routines to recreation.[78] The same controls were placed on men in barracks. However, not all the women found the strictures of barrack life easy to adopt.

The case of Corporal (Miss) Morley is perhaps not typical as it reached the attentions of headquarters, but it does illustrate the pressure that some women felt adjusting to the rigours of army life. In a statement made on 24 February 1941 to the Administrative Officer of the Technical Services Corps to which she was seconded, Corporal (Miss) Morley claimed that, in addition to her daily work at Impala House, she had to perform duties at barracks that were "undoubtedly too much" and caused her to collapse while on duty.[79] In addition to the daily work and barracks duties, Waasies were expected to attend "various compulsory parades, gargle parades,[80] mess parades, lectures, meetings etc. practically every morning and evening".[81] This led, she maintained, to details being at "breaking point for want of rest and quiet".[82] Morley's complaints were echoed by Sergeant (Miss) Forsyth who was also stationed at Impala House: "These duties are of a strenuous and exacting nature, entailing much mental strain".[83] Headquarters dismissed the claims as "frivolous and without foundation".[84] Nor, it seems, did many other women share these concerns.

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[77] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", p. 286.
[78] SANDFA, WADC, Box 33, AS 10-1 Orders Standing WAAS, Standing Orders WAAS Barracks Imperial Hospital and Convalescent Depot Howick, n.d.
[79] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F 9-13 Duties of WAAS in Barracks, Statement: Corporal (Miss) Morley, 24/2/1941.
[80] These were not technically a formal parade, but rather a vaguely enforced bi-weekly dental hygiene inspection.
[81] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F 9-13 Duties of WAAS in Barracks, Statement: Corporal (Miss) Morley, 24/2/1941.
[82] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F 9-13 Duties of WAAS in Barracks, Statement: Corporal (Miss) Morley, 24/2/1941.
[83] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F 9-13 Duties of WAAS in Barracks, Statement: Corporal (Miss) Morley, 24/2/1941.
[84] SANDFA, Box 3, WADC, DR(W)F 9-13 Duties of WAAS in Barracks, WAAS Barracks, 27/2/1941.

The strict control of barrack life resembled the restrictions placed on men living in barracks; control was needed in order to maintain military discipline. However, for the women of the WAAS, an extra layer of control was implemented: military supervision would replace the supervision of parents or spouses.[85] Women living in barracks was a further element to their militarisation. Despite the fact that these were *women's* barracks, the historical view, according to Chetty was that "army barracks [were] considered the least appropriate place for young women".[86] In part, the apparent impropriety of women living in barracks could be tied to the argument made by Joshua Goldstein – a scholar who has written widely on war and society, particularly the effects that war has on gender – that the successful cohesion of (male) military units stems from male bonding rituals;[87] with barracks as one place where these could take place. Furthermore, the apparent "impropriety" of women's barracks can be likened to the control of the army women's sexuality. The barracks were seen as a place dominated by single men, and as such, it was a place heavily associated with the sexuality of these young men.[88] The inclusion of women into this historically masculine realm – even though they were kept separate in their gendered barracks – led to fears that women would somehow be tainted by male sexuality. Therefore, the control exerted over those women who lived in barracks was not only military discipline but also social discipline which attempted to control a female sexuality deeply connected to prevailing social anxieties about moral propriety.

Having these girls cloistered away from parental supervision and in close proximity to male soldiers, it was feared that this was a recipe for sexual immorality.[89] Headquarters took pains to promote the image of life in the women's barracks as being safe in this regard. Emphasis was placed on the barracks as a new home – with hand-made curtains and fresh flowers – rather than a military encampment. The ATS in Britain did much the same with both male military authorities and female ATS officers seeking to ensure comfortable living conditions for the servicewomen.[90] Not only was this supposedly homely air seen as a way of acclimatising women to military life, but it was also promoted as an important safeguard

[85] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", p. 114.
[86] Chetty, p. 114.
[87] Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press, 2001), p. 183.
[88] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", p. 114.
[89] Suryakanthie Chetty, "All the News That's Fit to Print: The Print Media of the Second World War and Its Portrayal of the Gendered and Racial Identities of the War's Participants," *South African Historical Journal* 54, no. 1 (2005), p. 41 & Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", p. 114.
[90] Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, pp. 116-117.

against potential sexual immorality. It also speaks to a "pragmatic femininity" adopted by servicewomen during World War II; making the best of new environments while adapting to military culture.[91] Naturally, this could also be read as a well organised marketing strategy to entice women to the army. At the same time, it would alleviate the concerns of the "guardians" of young women who would feel at ease releasing their daughters and wives to such a convivial environment.

Despite the issues that the Waasies faced after attestation – the difficulties of getting used to military discipline or the pressure to conform to a desired form of femininity – it would appear as though the majority adapted well to their new environs. Although their reasons for volunteering were as varied as the women themselves, their adoption of military uniform and rank was an emblem of pride as demonstrated by the objections raised at a proposed change to their badges of rank.[92] It is clear that – whatever the external view of members of the WAAS was in terms of questioning their femininity or sexual behaviour – the Waasies primarily saw themselves as fully fledged members of the South African army: they were more than just "pretty girls" doing their bit for the nation's war effort, in their own eyes.

### 3.3.2 External perceptions of the WAAS by South African Servicemen

The adoption of uniform and barracks routine was not enough to fully transform these women into servicewomen. Archaic views that only men go to war have led to the perception that women are "history's designated non-combatants".[93] What this meant for the women of the WAAS, is that their adoption of external markers of the military – like uniforms, command structure and discipline in barracks – were not enough for them to be fully accepted as members of the South African military structure. Although their own perception was that they had become militarised, this was not necessarily shared outside the WAAS. The acceptance – or indeed lack thereof – of the WAAS as a military service can most easily be seen in the pages of the *Nongqai*, a monthly magazine for South African servicemen. Here – particularly in the first few months of the existence of the WAAS – several cartoons appear that depict the perceived frivolity of Army women, and their apparent obsession with feminine concerns like

[91] Erica Millar, "Carving a Feminine Space in a Masculine Environment: The Diary of an Australian Military Nurse", *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal* 14, no. 14 (2005). p. 11.
[92] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Addendum to 'Regulations; WAAS and WAAF' 12/5/1941. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
[93] Jean Bethke Elshtain: "Women and War" in *The Oxford History of Modern War*, C. Townsend (ed.), p. 303.

their physical attractiveness. These primarily show Wassies serving in the capacity as secretary or typist, thus reinforcing any gender stereotypes that were afloat amongst servicemen.


Figure 3.3: "A Private Call"[80]


Figure 3.4: "Don't be so ridiculous, Captain!"[81]

In the January 1941 issue alone,[94] there are two cartoons poking fun at Army girls. The first, *A Private Call* (Figure 3.3),[95] shows an attractive, blonde secretary in uniform (presumably a Waasie due to her uniform) answering a telephone call while a high-ranking moustached officer looms in the background, probably waiting for a call.

The second cartoon (Figure 3.4)[96] depicts a group of Waasies standing ready for inspection at a camp. While those in the background stand proudly at attention, smiling in their identical uniforms, hairdos and hats, the foreground is dominated by a conversation between an officer and a young recruit carrying a small dog. Here, women are depicted as being not only ignorant of proper military codes but also more focused on their personal lives rather than

[94] It is notable that this edition was released only a few months after the first WAAS recruits were drawn into military service. As the war continued and ever more women were drawn into the ranks of the UDF, so too did the frequency of cartoons of the WAAS and other branches of the WADC increase. The majority of these revolve around similar stereotypes of military femininity.
[95] SANDFA, Cartoon taken from *Nongqai*, January 1941, Vol XXXII, No. 1. p. 10.
[96] SANDFA, Cartoon taken from *Nongqai*, January 1941, Vol XXXII, No. 1. p. 36.

the war effort. In addition, they are represented as frivolous and oblivious to the roles they have assumed within the military structure. In the latter cartoon, a snide attack is also made on "posh" women and their pooches. Despite the tawdry attempts to tarnish the image of a woman in uniform for the sake of a brief moment of male banter, these women became even more necessary for the war effort as the war progressed.[97]

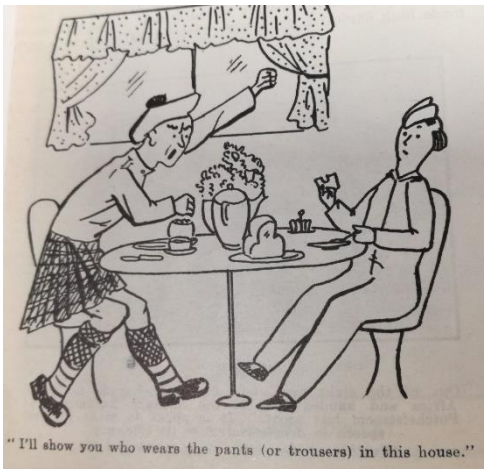


Figure 3.5: "I'll show you who wears the pants"

A few months later, in the March 1941 edition of the *Nongqai*, another cartoon (Figure 3.5)[98] depicts the danger of what could happen if a woman *did* fully immerse herself within the military structure. Here a husband and wife are shown at the breakfast table before leaving for their respective detachments. The husband is shown wearing a uniform that consists of a kilt – perhaps belonging to the Transvaal Scottish – while his wife is wearing what appears to be overalls (a common part of the uniform for those women who worked in the technical branches of both the WAAS and WAAF). The husband, with arm raised, shouts at his wife: "I'll show you who wears the pants (or trousers) in this house".

While obvious humour here stems from the fact that the husband is wearing a kilt and his wife is literally wearing the trousers, the cartoon also hints at fears that military women could become overly masculinised through their service – especially those who were trained and employed in military roles beyond the traditional (and, therefore, socially accepted) realm of women's work. In addition, the inversion of traditional gender norms (represented here through dress) speaks to the apparent threat of women and femininity to the masculine military. One of the arguments for keeping women out of the army has been that their presence would demoralise the (male) troops; essentially, women in the military would "symbolically castrate the armed forces".[99] The presence of women in the military, it was thought, would threaten the

[97] As the War progressed and the role of women within the war effort became more established, the frequency of these kinds of depictions diminished but did not die out completely.
[98] SANDFA, Cartoon taken from *Nongqai*, March 1941, Vol XXXII, No. 3. n.p.
[99] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London and New York: Granta Press, 1999), p. 336.

equilibrium as well as subvert the "traditional system of male dominance and the roles of female homemaker and male breadwinner".[100]

Despite the common lampooning of Waasies (and members of other branches of the WADC) in the pages of the *Nongqai*, it must be noted that this is only one lens into how WAAS members were perceived by South African servicemen; albeit one that was shared widely enough to be included in this servicemen's magazine. What these cartoons do show is that the identity of the WAAS as servicewomen or as true members of the UDF was not as readily accepted by their male counterparts as by the women themselves, particularly in the early stages of the existence of the WAAS. It is clear that, through the adoption of military uniform and rank and adapting to barrack life, the Waasies saw themselves as becoming different from civilian women; they began to feel that they were indeed *army* women, despite the jabs made by fellow servicemen, who themselves were a product of their own patriarchal upbringing.

## 3.4 Learning to Salute: Training

The adoption of external markers of military belonging like uniforms and adapting to life along military lines in barracks were essential in the Waasies' journey to becoming members of the South African military structure. Military identity and belonging were also (re)created in another manner: through training. Through their training, the women of the WAAS became more closely indoctrinated with the military culture

Training is key to the (re)creation of a recruit's identity from civilian to servicewoman. Joshua Goldstein argues that training, on the one hand, re-socialises (male) soldiers and recreates them as efficient fighters. In order for combatants to be effective in war, the training period is used to break down the identities of new soldiers so that they can be (re)created as combatants.[101] This theory, however, only applies to those members of the armed forces who are to be sent into combat. For the WAAS, as for other non-combatant members of the armed forces, training was not only used to ensure that the women behaved and thought "militarily", but it also ensured that high standards of efficiency would be maintained across the service, despite the varying educational standards of the women themselves.

[100] M. Michaela Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", *Women's Studies International Forum* 27, no. 1 (2004), p. 16.
[101] Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender*, p. 252 & Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 70.

The first training of new WAAS recruits was a three-week basic training at Voortrekkerhoogte.[102] The purpose of this training was to give new Waasies a grounding in correct military procedure and etiquette.[103] In essence, it was here that recruits "learned to salute", in the words of former WAAS Mary Benson.[104] In order for military discipline to be maintained it was crucial that these women learned how the military rank structure worked – not only understanding how and who to salute, but in turn from whom to take orders. This basic training maintains correct military hierarchies, and helps to ensure that soldiers (both male and female) serve effectively.[105] After this first introduction to military structure, the recruits were deployed to the units where they would later serve. From here they would be able to undertake other, more specialised courses; either to secure promotion, to be able to serve within a specific branch of the WAAS, or perhaps to gain skills that could be useful after the war.[106]

In its infancy as an MT Unit, the first specialised course that was set up to train women for wartime service through what would later become the WAAS was a motor transport course. This course was established for members of SAWAS in May 1940 – shortly before the WAAS officially came into being – and it was maintained throughout the lifespan of the WAAS.[107] Through this course, the women were first shown the basic mechanics of a vehicle and were expected to understand "what makes the wheels go round" before even learning how to drive.[108] Very few of these women knew how to drive before the course, let alone be *au fait* with the internal workings of an engine. However, as an article in *The Star* from October 1942 boasted: "When they have finished their course they know the highway code 'inside and out' […] Proof of the high standard they reach is given by the extremely low accident rate among the Army's women drivers".[109]

Although the WAAS began as an MT Unit, the growing need for manpower soon led to the expansion of the service's parameters. Due to the realisation that "everything should be

[102] A military base in Pretoria. It was renamed Thaba Tshwane in 1998.
[103] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4, p. 469.
[104] Mary Benson, *A Far Cry: The Making of a South African* (Pretoria: Sigma Press, 1996), p. 22.
[105] Jennifer G. Mathers, "Women and State Military Forces", in *Women and Wars*, ed. Carol Cohn (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), p. 127 & Joshua Goldstein: *War and Gender*, p. 252.
[106] The same pattern for training (basic training followed by sepecialised training) was used throughout the male and female branches of the UDF. The British women's auxiliary services also used the same configuration (See: Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, pp. 50-51).
[107] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 467.
[108] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 210 South African Women's Part in the War, Newspaper cutting: "How Women's Army Schools Train Recruits", *The Star*, 17/10/42.
[109] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 210 South African Women's Part in the War, Newspaper cutting: "How Women's Army Schools Train Recruits", *The Star*, 17/10/42.

done to raise the potential manpower in the Union",[110] one of the first expansions of the role of the WAAS was to train women to replace men in the Army's clerical sections. Throughout the War, the bulk of women in the WAAS served in technical and administrative functions.

Despite WAAS clericals being one of the founding roles of the service – as demonstrated by their cap badge – the Army had an almost insatiable need for more clericals who were well trained. Initially, women who signed up to become WAAS clericals were expected to have had training as secretaries or typists upon attestation. For the first portion of the War this strategy was not only adequate – having brought in "some thousand trained women"[111] as clericals – but it was also seen as a cost saving measure – saving the Treasury from paying for these women's additional training as clericals.[112]

Compounded by the ongoing recruitment crisis and the growing need for ever more clericals to prevent "a general slowing of the administrative machine",[113] the WAAS found itself short of 400 shorthand typists, 500 typists and between 600 and 700 clerks in 1942.[114] In order to solve this problem, it was decided (after much debate as to the costs this would incur versus the urgency of obtaining trained clericals) that a training programme for clericals would be implemented.

The reasoning for this was not only based on the need for more staff trained in this capacity, but it was also argued that as training programmes already existed throughout the UDF, and for other jobs within the WAAS, there was no reason why these women should continue to be trained at their own expense.[115] A direct parallel was drawn by Werdmuller, in a letter to the Secretary for Defence, to the training of male recruits to justify the implementation of this programme: "the average male recruit enlists and has to have approximately six month's training before he can be used for the purpose for which he is engaged. It would appear therefore that [this] is an established army practice".[116] The

[110] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 468.
[111] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, AG(W)F 1-1 WAAS Courses of Instructions in Shorthand and Typing, Clerical training course: Members of the WAAS, 29/10/1941.
[112] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, AG(W)F 1-1 WAAS Courses of Instructions in Shorthand and Typing, Clerical training course: Members of the WAAS, 29/10/1941.
[113] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, AG(W)F 1-1 WAAS Courses of Instructions in Shorthand and Typing, Training of Women shorthand typists and clericals for the forces, 30/9/1942.
[114] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, AG(W)F 1-1 WAAS Courses of Instructions in Shorthand and Typing, Training of Women shorthand typists and clericals for the forces, 30/9/1942.
[115] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, AG(W)F 1-1 WAAS Courses of Instructions in Shorthand and Typing, Clerical training course: Members of the WAAS, 29/10/1941.
[116] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, AG(W)F 1-1 WAAS Courses of Instructions in Shorthand and Typing, 'Clerical training course: Members of the WAAS, 29/10/1941.

implementation of free clerical training for the WAAS was finally approved at the end of 1942, most likely as an attempt to attract volunteers in the advent of the recruitment crisis.

For those who had the skills and drive other, more specialised opportunities were available. Those members who possessed an "excellent brain" and who had a good knowledge of a European language (mainly French and Spanish) could be recommended for a special intelligence course. If they passed the course, they could then go on to be used as translators, interpreters or in interrogation of Prisoners of War.[117] A further Elementary Interrogation course was also offered to those who were seen as "intelligent and capable"; those who did well were recommended for security work.[118]

Clericals were not the only positions for which members of the WAAS were needed. As the War progressed and the needs of both the UDF and the WAAS developed, so too did the types of jobs and the associated training courses grow. These changed over time; and sections were created and disbanded according to the Army's needs.[119] By April 1944, there were at least 15 distinct courses available. These are listed in the April 1944 edition of the *Nongqai* – which contains an article on the history of the WAAS as a regiment – and included the following: General Efficiency Course; Cookery Course; Clerical Course; Coast Artillery Course; Hygiene Course; Medical Administrative Course; Motor Transport Course; Physical Training Course; Signallers' Course; Special Signallers' Course; Regimental Course; Recruiting Officers' Course; Welfare Information Officers' Course; and Hospital Dieticians' Course.[120] These were generally available to those members of the WAAS who chose or were selected to serve in the respective sections. In addition to these general courses, those who were chosen to undertake specialised work were trained practically – they learned as they worked.[121]

No matter the course, entry requirements were strictly monitored. An example of these requirements can be found in a memo sent to all heads of sections regarding a WAAS Efficiency Course held on 18 September 1941 at the South African Military College, Voortrekkerhoogte, Pretoria. It was requested that:

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[117] SANDFA, WADC, Box 86, AS 68-14-1 Special intelligence course, Course 1425G: Special Intelligence and Elementary PW Interrogation, 16/12/1943.
[118] SANDFA, WADC, Box 86, AS 68-14-1 Special intelligence course, Course 1425G: Special Intelligence and Elementary PW Interrogation, 16/12/1943.
[119] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 468.
[120] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 469.
[121] The map-making section of the SA Engineering Corps, for example, was staffed entirely by women by 1944. They were taught their trade by making maps under the supervision of a male officer.

> All candidates must, if possible, be matriculated and must have clerical qualifications. Knowledge of bookkeeping will be a distinct asset.
> They must be under the age of 35 years and medically examined before nominated to ensure absolute physical fitness.
> Since it is desired to select some officers from the Course, only the very best candidates are to be sent forward.[122]

Despite these parameters, it was not always possible to select "only the very best". There were some cases where the preselection process was not rigorous enough. In a rather indignant letter to the senior training officer of the SAMC Training Centre, Sonderwater, for example, Captain J.G. Orford noted that in some cases "candidates who are plain 'Dom' [Afrikaans for 'stupid'] are allowed"![123] Not only did situations like this waste both the candidate and instructor's time but also spoiled the reputation of the unit responsible for the training. Those candidates who lacked the necessary intelligence or aptitude needed to be weeded out quickly. All members of the military (whether male or female) had to be, as pointed out by Corinna Peniston-Bird, "rendered fit, efficient, resilient, whatever their intended role, because every member of the workforce was a vital component of the war effort".[124]

Jean Weightman's rejection from Course 1021.P – PT and Games Leaders (WAAS and WAAF) is a clear example of this policy in practice. She had responded to a call for recruits in the press for the Durban Division and, after passing her medical evaluation with an A1 certificate, chose to sign up for the Physical Culture training course. Despite her quick acceptance into the training, her father was shocked to find that she had later been rejected. In his letter to the Director of Recruiting, he asks for clarification for the "high-handed action of the Military authorities at the College in question in dismissing [his] daughter".[125] Jean's father felt that "apart from the stipulation that she had to be medically fit, there is nothing in her attestment papers which suggests that she was required to have any special or particular qualifications to undertake this […] course".[126] Weightman felt that it was "ridiculous" for what he called the "Fountain Pen Brigade" in Pretoria to suggest that the authorities at the

[122] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, WAAS Efficiency Course, 19/7/1941.
[123] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, Letter to the senior training officer of the SAMC Training Centre, Sonderwater, 16/5/1942.
[124] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", p. 43.
[125] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, Letter to Director of Recruiting, 4/3/1942.
[126] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, Letter to Director of Recruiting, 4/3/1942.

College were in "a position to form any opinion whatsoever of [his] daughter's ability to make favourable progress in her training".[127]

In the correspondence on this matter between the relevant section heads, it becomes evident that Weightman's ire on behalf of his daughter was viewed as "absurd".[128] Here it is made clear that Jean was not targeted unfairly, despite her father's insinuation. She was in fact one of six other details who had been found unsuitable for this course. Furthermore, her unsuitability was based on rational grounds, for the time, rather than any prejudice towards this specific girl. In the official correspondence the reasons for her dismissal are clearly laid out. Not only was she a "heavily built girl",[129] but was "unaccustomed to exercise" and spent most of her time observing the class rather than taking part. Her lack of physical agility was also not mitigated by the fact that she "showed no outstanding ability as a leader"; [130] implying that her physical unsuitability for this course could have been mitigated *if* she had shown potential as a potential future officer in the WAAS. Based on this case, strict new requirements for PT courses were set out. The need for capable PT instructors can be traced to an idea held in the British armed forces that "fitness through regular exercise permitted an increased output of work and stamina, which would permit 'the body to rise to sudden additional calls made upon it [. . .]. This is most necessary in wartime'".[131] In addition, this case also reflects on the paternalistic role fathers and husbands played even within a military structure.

By looking at the training given to WAAS volunteers, it is clear that military training schemes for the WAAS were two-fold. Firstly, the volunteers had to be recreated through basic training: to shift from being civilian women to becoming parts of the military structure and gaining an understanding of what this meant.[132] Secondly, specific training courses insured that these women provided the military with the skills needed to continue the fight. If women were to adequately replace men in roles behind the lines, they needed to be able to do so with the same (if not better) skills demonstrated by the soldiers they were to replace. In order to

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[127] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, Letter to Director of Recruiting, 4/3/1942.
[128] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, RE: Course 1021.P – PT & Games Leaders (WAAS & WAAF) – 17.2.42 to 13.3.43, 6/4/1942.
[129] Weighing 180 lbs (82 Kg) at 5 ft.7 (1.7 m), she would be classified as overweight by modern standards. SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, RE: Course 1021.P – PT & Games Leaders (WAAS & WAAF) – 17.2.42 to 13.3.43, 6/4/1942.
[130] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, RE: Course 1021.P – PT & Games Leaders (WAAS & WAAF) – 17.2.42 to 13.3.43, 6/4/1942.
[131] Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", p. 43.
[132] As discussed in Chapter 2 training was not the only method used to ensure that UDF volunteers were successfully integrated into the structure of the South African military. The Army Education Scheme also had a hand in ensuring that service men and -women were ideologically prepared for war work.

understand how members of the WAAS were used by the military – especially in terms of those few who were able to overcome the combat taboo and become more than auxiliary – it is necessary to investigate the different jobs that these women undertook after their training.

## 3.5 Deployment

After completing their military training, the Waasies were moved into a wide variety of jobs needed to keep South Africa's war machine running. These ran the gamut from highly specialised to basic administrative posts. In their various functions, servicewomen were stationed throughout South Africa. Many also served overseas in Italy and the Middle East. In terms of this wide range of duties, it is clear that the majority of positions cleaved closely to the traditional war-time ideal of keeping women safely away from the front lines and in purely auxiliary roles. However, this does not necessarily paint the whole picture of the wartime contributions of the WAAS. As argued by Campbell, "auxiliary" work within the military sphere can be seen as a stage of women's integration into nations' armed forces.[133] In the context of the work undertaken by the WAAS, it is possible to categorise these in different stages that attempt to demonstrate the evolution of the WAAS from purely auxiliary to something more.

The first of these stages comprises work undertaken by the WAAS that was not only strictly auxiliary (in that it was not only non-combatant but also fulfilled a supportive role), but which can also be categorised as work which was most related to traditionally "feminine" roles. In other words, Wassies who performed tasks that have been traditionally associated with women (both in the civilian and military contexts); such as secretaries and clerical staff or nurturing Welfare Officers. The second categorisation speaks to work that has more typically been coded as masculine; or, more accurately, work which had previously only been performed by men in the UDF. These traditionally "masculine" jobs undertaken by the WAAS can be further split between those who performed them in a strictly non-combatant capacity and those who moved closer to combat, or at least to a combat zone.[134]

[133] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1993), p. 318.
[134] Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, p. 301.

### 3.5.1 Camp Followers in Uniform: WAAS Clericals and the Entertainment Unit as part of feminine wartime work

The majority of work undertaken by the WAAS was kept well within the auxiliary sphere. Not only was their work far removed from combat, but it was also positioned safely within perceived gendered roles. These gendered roles resembled traditional archetypes of women's war work. These feminine auxiliary roles included, but were not limited to, WAAS clericals, Welfare and Information Officers and the women of the Entertainment Unit.

The secretaries and clericals fell neatly within the safe (feminine) sphere of auxiliary women's war work. They made up part of the UDF's support system and can be categorised as belonging to feminist scholar Laura Sjoberg's category of "Women and war preparation".[135] WAAS clericals took over non-combatant administrative jobs that not only allowed capable men to join the fight but also maintained the smooth running of South Africa's War machine. In this position, the clericals also became versions of the modern military industrial complex's "Camp Followers". Although traditional conceptions of the camp follower were no longer relevant by World War II, due to the increasing bureaucratization and professionalization of the military, their function as a practical support system for the military remained.[136] Camp followers were now (WAAS) "Ladies in Uniform".

While the greater majority of these WAAS clericals were employed in headquarters and at detachments both in South Africa and beyond, not all found themselves in military employ. Despite their status as members of the UDF, a not insignificant number were disgruntled to find themselves working as telegraphists for the Post Office. It was claimed that the Post Office, like many other large civilian institutions, found themselves suffering from a labour shortage by 1945. As such the Post Office had asked the military authorities to "second a number of girls" to make up this shortfall. In addition, it was argued that this was a golden opportunity for these women as they would almost be assured of a full-time position as telegraphists after the war. The problem, however, arose because many of these women felt that they had been "press-ganged" into civilian jobs under false pretences: they had signed up for military service but found themselves (unwillingly) in civilian employ.

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[135] Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict* (Combridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014), p. 31.
[136] Sarah Zimmerman, "Mesdames Tirailleurs and Indirect Clients: West African Women and the French Colonial Army, 1908-1918," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44, no. 2 (2011), p. 301 & Mathers, "Women and State Military Forces", p. 130.

This was compounded due to the fact that some 50 of the women seconded to the Johannesburg Post Office were fully trained artillery specialists (belonging to both the WAAS and WAAF). These women had no intention of following a career in the postal service after the war and were eager to return to coastal defence. In fact, only eight showed any desire to become Post Office employees after the war. A compromise was reached whereby those who were not interested in working for the Post Office would be released after three months' training.[137] What this incident portrays is that the military as well as civilian bodies (like the Post Office) saw members of the WAAS primarily as a means to solve the ongoing labour crisis that had been created by the war. In terms of this it was preferable to keep women – despite them having been trained in front-line defence – far removed from the war and in positions that were deemed more socially acceptable.

A second position that was filled by the women of the WAAS also clearly relates to past tropes of women's war work. Welfare and Information Officers – in both the WAAS and the WAAF – were tasked with taking care of the daily problems of these newly fledged army women. They were tasked with caring for the emotional, rather than physical, needs of troops (both male and female). Welfare and Information Officers also become stand-in mothers for the Waasies.

The 19th Reserve Motor Transport Company was at the front line of the UDF's "Battle Against Boredom".[138] Better known as the Entertainment Unit, this was perhaps one of the only truly mixed units, with both men and women serving together in the same capacity. The companies of the Entertainment Unit – which grew from four in 1941 to 18 by 1945 – provided "a tonic for nerves which [were] on edge and [ensured] an antedote [*sic.*] to 5th column activities",[139] by putting on shows at military camps across the Union and overseas. Women who were brought into the Entertainment Corps through the WAAS – for example, as comediennes – were classified as artisans and, as such, were immediately promoted to the rank of Sergeant or Staff-Sergeant.[140] It is worth pointing out that some companies were, by definition, located in combat zones. Nevertheless, their work was that of an auxiliary nature.

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[137] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 66 Women on Active Service – Re-Employment, Newspaper cutting: "Service Women were not 'Press-Ganged' says PM-G", *Rand Daily Mail*, 14/2/45.
[138] SANDFA, "The Union Defence Force Entertainment Units: Fighting the War of Nerves in our Camps" in *Nongqai*, September 1941, Vol XXXII, No. 9. p. 1185.
[139] SANDFA, "The Union Defence Force Entertainment Units: Fighting the War of Nerves in our Camps" in *Nongqai*, September 1941, Vol XXXII, No. 9. p. 1181.
[140] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 120.

The role of the men and women of the Entertainment Unit was to provide the fighting men with an escape or distraction from their situation. This "distraction" also took the form of motivation and moral support for the fighting men. Thus, it can be said to be part of providing the South African military "with what they need to fight"; positioning the Waasies who joined the Entertainment Unit as part of "Women and war preparation".[141] Here, another warfront is identified, "The war of nerves", and these women and men were tasked with winning the battle.

What this shows is that the majority of the work undertaken by the WAAS – for example, as clericals, substitute mothers and entertainers – fits neatly into the conception of women as auxiliaries. Here, some men were also included into the endeavour. This type of work was clearly non-combatant and was far removed from the actual business of waging war. In addition to this, much of this work fell within socially accepted conventions of "women's work"; particularly in terms of archetypes of female behaviour in wartime. For the most part, these Waasies were involved in the traditional role of supporting the fighting men. Unlike their predecessors during past wars, the WAAS was an official part of the workings of South Africa's army.

### 3.5.2 The *Mossies* – WAAS Clericals "Up North": Female Auxiliaries near the Battle Front

Although much of the work undertaken by the WAAS can be categorised as being both feminine and strictly auxiliary, there were instances when this work moved (physically) closer to the arena of combat. WAAS clericals, members of the Entertainment Unit and MT Drivers did not only serve within the borders of the Union. Many members of the WAAS also served alongside the men of the South African army in various capacities overseas. This brought the women (but not their work) close to active war zones. For the "*Mossies*",[142] as those who served "Up North" were dubbed,[143] their work remained well-within the realm of the auxiliary but their situation was removed from the safety of the home front. This means that while their work may still have fallen into the traditionally accepted parameters of women's war work, their physical environment did not.[144]

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[141] Sjoberg: *Gender, War & Conflict*, pp. 31-32.
[142] Afrikaans for Sparrow.
[143] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 252, North Africa – Women's Units, Newspaper cutting: "South African Women in Kenya", *The Star*, 6/11/1940.
[144] Millar, "Carving a Feminine Space in a Masculine Environment: The Diary of an Australian Military Nurse", p. 9.

Much like South Africa's servicemen, the women of the WAAS had to indicate if they were willing to "engage in the Active Citizen Force, whether within or outside the limits of South Africa for the duration of the present war" upon attestation.[145] The Waasies were also encouraged to take the "Red Tab Oath" signalling their willingness to serve "Up North" to which the conflict in Africa and the Middle-East was referred. This oath was established by Jan Smuts, in his capacity as Minister of Defence, to overcome the conundrum that military service with the UDF was (at the beginning of the War) restricted to defence of the Union from within its borders. It was soon realised that this would not be sufficient; men would have to be sent overseas if South Africa was to be a contributing party to the global war effort.

For the WAAS, this oath was only available for women under 41-years-old but over 25.[146] Those women who did serve outside South Africa were selected, not only based on their willingness to go beyond the county's borders, but also based on their aptitude for this duty. Firstly, it was requested that those members chosen to be sent "Up North" be "grounded in military routine and discipline before embarkation".[147] "Up North" the situation in which these women worked was far removed from the conditions under which they had worked back home. They were much closer to the reality of combat and, as such, worked in a more strictly military environment. By selecting only those were had shown a good grasp of "military routine and discipline",[148] it would be ensured that servicewomen would be able to cope with any added pressures generated by their exposure to warfare.

Secondly, only those with good experience and qualifications were selected. As with those who remained in South Africa, the most sought-after candidates were those with clerical or typing experience. Those who were selected had to have proven that they were capable of performing their duties well so as not to waste military resources by having to first be trained or by being sent back home because they were unable to do what was needed.

The demand for well-trained and capable clericals "Up North" apparently led to "tears" at Command as many (male) officers felt that they were being "robbed of their trained

[145] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Form of Application for Enlistment for whole-time Voluntary service in Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, n.d.
[146] SANDFA, WADC, Box 2, DR(W)F 6 WAAS Members Volunteering for Service Outside Union, WAAS Volunteers for Service outside the Union, 18/1/1941. By comparison, for UDF servicemen, the Oath was available for those between 21 and 45 years old.
[147] SANDFA, WADC, Box 2, DR(W)F 6 WAAS Members Volunteering for Service Outside Union, WAAS Volunteers for Service outside the Union, 18/1/1941.
[148] SANDFA, WADC, Box 2, DR(W)F 6 WAAS Members Volunteering for Service Outside Union, WAAS Volunteers for Service outside the Union, 18/1/1941.

personnel".[149] Clericals were in high demand throughout the Defence Force, not only overseas, and this made it difficult to fulfil staff needs. The high value placed on skill and capability shows that the women who served "Up North" were expected to be more than just ornamental but had to be capable of undertaking their work in a new, potentially dangerous context.

These women were – despite their auxiliary jobs – being sent into theatres of operations and as such their lives were at risk due to their proximity to combat. Due to this risk, it was initially decided that only single women with no dependents would be sent overseas, to mitigate the impact of potential death on any dependents a woman might have. But the need for womanpower continued and overseas service was expanded in 1942 to include married women who did not have young children and who could attain their husband's permission for their service abroad.[150]

The first WAAS draft to leave the Union departed for Nairobi on 13 September 1940. The task of these nine women – one officer and eight other ranks – was to establish a WAAS detachment in Nairobi for those women who followed.[151] After this first departure, many subsequent drafts followed at regular intervals. Women's overseas service was further expanded in August 1941, when the first WAAS draft was sent to Egypt. From here until the end of the War, South African women would also serve in the Middle East and in Italy.

Esme Butt outlined the history of the first WAAS detachment sent North in September 1940 in her official history entitled "And Thirty-four went by Sea".[152] Butt, who was a member of this contingent, outlines in detail the excitement and sense of adventure felt by these first 34 women to be sent to East Africa. Most notable in her narrative is the overwhelming sense of pride that she and her fellows felt at their "momentous, historical" journey; and the sense of encouragement that they felt they gave to "the boys".[153] Butt's history is centred on the feminine validation that the Waasies seem to have given the troops through sing-songs and

[149] SANDFA, WADC, Box 2, DR(W)F 6 WAAS Members Volunteering for Service Outside Union, WAAS Volunteers for Service outside the Union, 18/1/1941.
[150] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, DR(W)F 2-13 Women to Theatres of Operations, Despatch of Women to Theatres of Operations, 13/2/1942.
[151] SANDFA, WADC, Box 2, DR(W)F 6 WAAS Members Volunteering for Service Outside Union, WAAS Volunteers for Service outside the Union, 18/1/1941 & "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4, p. 469.
[152] SANDFA, UWH, Box 122, NarepEA4, "And 34 went by sea" by E. Butt formerly Van Coller. May 1943. First "WAAS" draft to East Africa 1940, 12/5/1943. Unfortunately, Butt does not record her rank in this text.
[153] SANDFA, UWH, Box 122, NarepEA4, "And 34 went by sea" by E. Butt formerly Van Coller. May 1943. First "WAAS" draft to East Africa 1940, 12/5/1943.

impromptu dances, and their own feelings of adventure. Despite this narrative, the women who served "Up North" were expected to handle the stress of working closer to combat.

By taking the "Red Tab Oath", the women of the WAAS who were deployed "Up North" indicated that they were willing to serve in a different capacity to their fellows who only served within the Union. The "*Mossies*" had to show that they were not only willing to serve in a (potentially) more dangerous arena, but also had to prove that they were capable of coping in this environment. What this shows is that, although they were doing much the same work as clericals in the Union, the women who served outside South Africa were selected based on their aptitude for working efficiently close to active war by obeying orders and showing good military discipline. Here they were able to challenge the perception (as illustrated in the cartoons in pages of the *Nongqai*) that servicewomen were little more than ornamental.

### 3.5.3 WAAS Technicals taking over men's work

There were also a number of specialised positions that related more directly to the needs of warfare while still being removed from the necessity of actual combat. These specialised positions were – before the advent of the War necessitated the integration of white women into the UDF – wholly dominated by male non-combatants within the Army.

The creation of the WAAS stemmed from women taking over what had been a job undertaken by male auxiliaries: MT Drivers. MT Drivers were not the only WAAS members who were expected to know and understand the workings of engines but from the beginning of the WAAS until 1944, these women also worked as despatch riders.[154] They delivered messages and packages to Commands on motorbikes. Wearing long trousers and being exposed to the elements made this an outwardly "unfeminine" job.

Another example of women taking over previously masculine jobs through the WAAS were the map-making specialists who worked in the Corps of Engineers. The work called for women with drawing ability, who had "good eyesight, perseverance, application and initiative"[155] to take over the highly skilled work of creating accurate maps for the UDF. The

[154] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4, p. 467.
[155] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women. Newspaper Cutting: "Woman Specialists in the Army: Important Job of Making Maps done by WAAS Unit", *The Star*, 20/10/43.

work was highly detailed and followed a complex series of steps to ensure that the maps were of utmost accuracy. It was also considered an essential service for the fighting forces.[156]

Waasies also served as armourers from September 1942 onwards. Here, after a two-month course at the Pretoria Technical College, those who passed would be posted to the armouries to take control of the repair and assembly of rifles and other small arms needed by the fighting men. Like those in map-making, the armourers had to be highly trained. Not only did they have to be able to interpret technical drawings but also be able to accurately use a variety of engineering hand-tools and other precision instruments "some of which measure to the thousandth part of an inch".[157] Accurate maps and well-serviced weaponry were both necessary as part of the equipment needed to wage war.

What binds this diversity of work is that many of these positions had previously been the sole prerogative of men – especially in the UDF. While it was feared (both by those within the UDF and civilians) that this shift would "completely upset our military and social structure";[158] others took a more optimistic view. In an article published in October 1942 entitled "How Women's Army has grown in the useful and patriotic work of the WAAS – Valuable Training for Post-War Life", the reporter celebrates the diversity of white South African women working together in a common cause. It goes on to suggest that this marked a turning point in gender-stereotyped roles by cheekily insinuating that, in the future, "fitting a new washer to a leaking tap, or dealing with a refractory stove, will find mother the handyman about the home, with a dutiful husband relegated to the slaughter of slugs in the garden".[159] While these societal shifts began to emerge in the media, even bigger changes were occurring within the military command.

### 3.5.4 Duties Other than Non-Combatant Duties: The AS-WAAS

As the war progressed and the duties of the WAAS expanded to include ever more skills, women were mustered into new positions, positions moving ever closer to combat. For

[156] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women. Newspaper Cutting: "Woman Specialists in the Army: Important Job of Making Maps done by WAAS Unit", *The Star*, 20/10/43.
[157] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women. Newspaper Cutting: "How Women's Army has grown in the useful and patriotic work of the WAAS – Valuable Training for Post-War Life", *The Star*, 6/10/42.
[158] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.
[159] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "How Women's Army has grown in the useful and patriotic work of the WAAS – Valuable Training for Post-War Life", *The Star*, 6/10/42.

a select few Waasies, their wartime service would not only cross the border between masculine and feminine war work but also narrowed the gap between non-combatant and combatant.

By 1942, war was heating up in South Africa, with Japanese submarines coming dangerously close to the Durban coast.[160] Fears began to mount that the war would finally reach South African shores. To counter these fears new war measures were implemented, outlining the steps to be taken in case this fear became a reality. Crucially for the WAAS, in March 1942 a memorandum was sent out from the office of Col. Werdmuller, stating how best use was to be made of WAAS personnel "in view of the present serious situation and the possibility of hostilities, air attack or other enemy action in South Africa".[161] Much of the clerical staff would have to be trained for emergency work as soon as possible, and arrangements would have to be made for the transportation of married servicewomen with young children and those living outside of barracks. Outside of these more practical concerns, decisions were also made regarding how to best capitalise on the specialised work of the WAAS personnel.[162]

The first special training course for female Coastal Artillery Specialists, in South Africa, was held in 1941, the year before tensions along the South African coast forced the UDF to consider using women for emergency defence. South African candidates, between 22- and 32-years-old, were called to join a three-month artillery specialist training. Priority was reserved for attested members of the WAAS who were physically fit, in possession of a matric certificate, and who were "self-reliant and [had] no family ties".[163] Here the women would be trained in a variety of crucial skills needed for coastal defence: Gunnery; Ballistics; Range Finding; and Map Reading were some of their core skills.[164] Once qualified they would be afforded the privilege of wearing the specialist badges of the artillery.[165] The women who qualified as artillery specialists went on to join a dedicated section of the WAAS: the Artillery Specialists-WAAS (AS-WAAS).

In 1941, Britain also began to deploy women in the capacity of artillery specialists. Members of the ATS – the equivalent to the WAAS – were placed as soldiers in protected anti-

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[160] Bill Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012), p. 123.
[161] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 79 Utilisation of WAAS Personnel in an emergency, Utilisation WAAS personnel in any emergency, 19/3/1941.
[162] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 79 Utilisation of WAAS Personnel in an emergency, Utilisation WAAS personnel in any emergency, 19/3/1941.
[163] SANDFA, WADC, Box 12, DR(W)F 36 Training of WAAS Coast Artillery Specialists, Training of Coast Artillery Specialists, 12/7/1941.
[164] SANDFA, WADC, Box 12, DR(W)F 36 Training of WAAS Coast Artillery Specialists, Women's Artillery Specialists Course, 21/7/1941.
[165] SANDFA, WADC, Box 12, DR(W)F 36 Training of WAAS Coast Artillery Specialists, WAAS Employed in Heavy Btys SAA, 21/7/1941.

aircraft (AA) batteries; where men could be freed to fight on the continent.[166] ATS women who served in AA batteries were trained in every aspect needed to fully run a successful battery, except one. While the women knew how to set the range and bearing of the AA guns, they were never permitted to actually pull the trigger. Their jobs were confined to a non-combatant role to prevent public outcry over the nature of their work. [167] Male soldiers continued to be employed in these batteries for the purpose of pulling the trigger.[168] Despite this limitation, ATS women were granted military status in 1941.[169]

Members of the AS-WAAS formed a distinct unit within the larger WAAS. As such, according to War Measure 91 of 1942 – which was released at the end of August 1942 – it was now lawful "notwithstanding anything in any other law contained" for the women of the WADC to be employed in "duties other than non-combatant duties".[170] Those who were willing to do so had to first give their official consent to "perform such duties as may be prescribed in terms of Proclamation 215 of 1942".[171] This was known as the Combat Oath. While the inclusion of "duties other than non-combatant duties" was applied across the WADC, the unwieldly phrasing meant that the exact parameters of these duties were interpreted differently by the three individual branches.

The conjunction of these two decrees would have massive effects on the status of one section of the WAAS in particular. Unlike other WAAS detachments, the AS-WAAS were required to consent to the strictures of Proclamation 215 of 1942. This loosening of the non-combatant restriction placed on the WAAS muddied the status of the larger WAAS as a purely non-combatant, auxiliary unit.

Performing "duties other than non-combatant duties" was a core function of the AS service; as such consenting to be employed on operational duty was required, lest they be

[166] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1993), p. 302.
[167] Natalia Zalietok, "British and Soviet Women in the Military Campaign of 1939-45: A Comparative Review", *MCU Journal*, (2018), p. 18 & Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p 71.
[168] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", pp. 307-308.
[169] Campbell, p. 310.
[170] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 3/9/1942.
[171] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 3/9/1942.

transferred to a different WAAS unit.[172] The reasoning behind this was that these women were attested for service in Heavy Artillery Batteries. They were trained as: gunners, signallers, range finders and gun layers, to name but a few.[173] Like their sisters in British ATS AA batteries, these women were expected to work (and potentially fight) alongside their male comrades-in-arms. However, in both countries, women were barred from actually firing the guns. This was due to the confluence of the combat taboo and women's supposed inability to kill.[174] With combat being defined as "an organized lethal attack on an organized enemy",[175] the members of the AS-WAAS were only combatant to a degree: they took part in the organised attack but could not be allowed to contribute to the lethal part of the attack without breaking the gendered perception of women as life-givers rather than life-takers. This shows that, under the exceptional circumstances of South Africa's need for front-line defence in AA Batteries, the combat taboo could be loosened by women's proximity to killing but they could not gain completely equal combatant status as the men who pulled the trigger.

The AS-WAAS was made up of "some hundreds of girls parked in batteries around the South African coastline in front-line positions".[176] This is what differentiated the AS-WAAS from the rest of the Service: their position as potential combatants on front-line positions. These women were trained to "assist in defending this country from attack from the sea".[177] Unlike other WAAS Detachments stationed at units of the South African Army – both within the Union and outside its borders – the AS-WAAS was attached to an active combatant unit.[178]

It was initially unclear to some detachments exactly what this new issue of "duties other than non-combatant duties" entailed. This obtuse phrase was generally used rather than directly referring to these women's new status as *combatants*. The Officer Commanding of WAAS Detachment, Durban, for example, felt that it was necessary for those WAAS Barracks Staff members employed at the Artillery Camp, Bluff, to be "considered as being employed in duties other than non-combatant duties", even though they were not artillery specialists themselves but served in the same capacities as WAAS auxiliary members stationed at any other unit. The

[172] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, For attention: Capt. (Mrs) Barclay - Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, n.d.
[173] SANDFA, WADC, Box 12, DR(W)F 36 Training of WAAS Coast Artillery Specialists, WAAS Employed in Heavy Btys SAA, 20/10/1941 & 21/7/1941.
[174] Bourke: *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 321.
[175] Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 301.
[176] SANDFA, "SA Women with our Coastal Guns" in *Nongqai*, November 1941, Vol XXXII, No. 11, p. 1522.
[177] SANDFA, "SA Women with our Coastal Guns" in *Nongqai*, November 1941, Vol XXXII, No. 11, p. 1522.
[178] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 94.

barracks staff felt that they faced the same risks and should therefore be afforded the same status. While they were not actually engaged in combatant duties, it was felt by the commanding officer that these women faced "the same, if not greater risks" than the (female) artillery specialists in the Bluff area.[179] According to the OC's reasoning:

> […] in the event of the alarm, the Arty specialists proceed immediately to their stations and the Barracks Staff remain in camp to undertake duties of Fire Piquet etc. Most of the Arty Specialists are engaged on duties in the Plotting Room, this is considerably safe from air and other attack. This, however, does not apply to Barracks Staff".[180]

After careful consideration, the request was denied. It was felt that this would set a precedent whereby all WAAS members serving in coastal areas would have to give consent to be employed on operational duties or else be moved to inland postings, which would create a disruption for all "administrative, stores and other section[s] in the Coastal Area".[181]

Despite the status of the AS-WAAS as potential combatants serving with an active combatant unit, the fear of creating a precedent for servicewomen held fast. They were not allowed to pull the trigger and engage in killing the enemy directly. This need to bar servicewomen – even those who served on the Union's front lines – from fully becoming combat stems from the perception that female violence (as opposed to male violence) is abhorrent.[182] Additionally, contemporary gender norms painted women as lacking the "killer instinct" of a real soldier thus rendering them unable to perform one of the key duties of a combatant soldier: killing the enemy.[183] Although the women of the AS-WAAS trained, served and lived alongside their male counterparts, they were prevented from taking the final step to becoming fully realised combatants. What this means is that, while the combat taboo was greatly relaxed for the AS-WAAS as members of an active combatant unit, it was not completely done away with. They were trained and stationed in combatant units, ready for combat but they never fired a gun.

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[179] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 11/2/1943.
[180] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 11/2/1943.
[181] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 11/2/1943.
[182] Elshtain: "Women & War", p. 307.
[183] Bourke: *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 321.

The use of WAAS members as Coastal Artillery Specialists – and the limited arming of some WAAS detachments – points to a recognition of Waasies as being capable of more than just auxiliary roles. By working directly alongside male soldiers in the AA Batteries, the AS-WAAS demonstrated their ability to work in active, front-line units. Although their status as "combatants" remained incomplete, this undertaking moved some members of the WAAS away from being purely auxiliary, towards something more through the relaxation of the combat taboo and their integration into combat units.

## 3.6 Chapter Conclusion

When the WAAS was created in 1940 as a women's auxiliary service for the South African army it was framed as a purely non-combatant, auxiliary unit. The reasons for its creation are twofold. It grew from the desire of members of the civilian SAWAS to be allowed to do more than knit socks for servicemen. At the same time, the UDF's poor state at the outbreak of World War II meant that manpower needed to be increased. Bringing women into the army as non-combatant auxiliaries would free servicemen to join the war as active combatants.[184]

The WAAS was part of the larger military structure of the South African military. This meant that its organisational structure mirrored that of the South African army in terms of rank structure, chain of command and training. However, the need to preserve social gender norms prevailed.[185] As a *women's* service the WAAS had to remain subordinate to the men they aided. This is clearly reflected in the chain of command at detachment level. The female OC of a WAAS detachment was always answerable to the male OC of the army unit. As a microcosm of society, the social order had to be preserved by the military.[186]

Despite the placement of the Waasies as auxiliaries who were separate and secondary to the men of the army, the women took on a military identity. They saw themselves as

[184] Nicholson, *Millions like Us: Women's Lives during the Second World War*, p. 86.
[185] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 302 & Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", p. 15.
[186] Ian van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African armed forces, an historical perspective", paper presented at the Second South African Conference on Strategic Theory, "On Strategy; Military culture and African armed forces", co-hosted by Stellenbosch University and the Royal Danish Defence College, 22-23 September 2011, p. 2.

becoming militarised through the wearing of uniforms and adapting to the regimented rules of barrack life. Through their basic training, the norms of military rules and behaviour were further absorbed by these women. Training shaped them from civilians into servicewomen and located them within the military culture of the South African army.

Servicemen, especially at the beginning of the WAAS's life, did not share this view. As for the WADC as a whole, the self-perception of the Waasies was at odds with servicemen's views that military women were a temporary, decorative feature at best or a disruptive threat to both military and social structures at worst.

The core motivation for establishing the WAAS was to replace men in non-combatant positions with women in order to alleviate manpower needs for the UDF. This opened the opportunity for WAAS members (for the duration of the War) to enter into jobs that had previously been either dominated by men or the sole preserve of male members of the UDF. As MT drivers, despatch riders and armorers, Waasies were not only able to demonstrate their capacity for this type of work but were also more accepted as members of the UDF as the war drew on; creating different levels of auxiliary actions.

For a select few this slow movement beyond simple auxiliary roles went even further. With the heating up of the War along South Africa's coastline, new considerations for the use of WAAS members were brought to the fore. Waasies were trained and deployed as Coastal Artillery Specialists and a new WAAS unit was created: the AS-WAAS. In this capacity, the women served and worked closely alongside male Coastal Artillery Specialists in what was an active combatant unit in front-line positions. Although these women were not officially permitted to pull the trigger, they were some of the only WAAS members who had the legal ability to be employed in "duties other than non-combatant duties",[187] meaning that, at least in principle, they were able to overcome the full restriction of the combat taboo. Members of the AS-WAAS were combatants and were no longer purely auxiliary although they never got the opportunity to fire a bullet.

In conclusion, what this chapter has shown is that the women of the WAAS were able to move beyond their placement as auxiliary on two different levels: personally and practically. Personally, through their adoption of and adaptation to military structure, discipline and life, the Waasies saw themselves as becoming militarised or as true members of the UDF. This was

[187] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 3/9/1942.

reinforced through their training. Practically, it was through their deployment that some WAAS members were able to move beyond the auxiliary. While the majority served in an auxiliary capacity, the members of the AS-WAAS were able to move towards transgressing the combat taboo through their potential status as combatants belonging to an active combatant unit. This points the divisional differences that existed within the WADC which allowed for flexibility within the parameters of what constituted auxiliary and combatant.

# Chapter 4: More than just Pretty Girls and Spanners: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force, 1940-1945

The Women's Auxiliary Air Force was established alongside the WAAS, in June 1940. The WAAF grew out of the civilian South African Women's Aviation Association. Some 6 500 women served in the WAAF; [1] making up 31% of the total WADC womanpower. They became mechanics and skilled artisans; charged with inspecting aircraft, the maintenance of airfields and working on the engines of a variety of aircraft. The corps also included 36 "A" licenced women pilots. In December 1940 the first detachment of the WAAF was sent "Up North" to serve in North Africa.

The formation, deployment and gendered issues surrounding the involvement of women in the air force has been investigated in the context of other nation's women's auxiliary services. The British WAAF, in particular, has garnered attention.[2] As have Russian women in their exceptional role as fully-fledged combat pilots.[3] In South Africa, historical interest has been largely lacking. As pointed out by military historian David Katz, there is a gap in the historiography of South Africa's World War II in relation to support services like the WADC.[4] This is reiterated by Weronika Grzebalska who argues that this silence is doubled by the invisibility of women in general war histories.[5]

Three useful works about the South African WAAF have, however, emerged. The first of these is *The South African WAAF* by K. Jameson and D. Ashburner.[6] This was an official commemorative history of the WAAF published in 1948 and written by two former Waafs. Like other works of this genre, this is an uncritical portrayal of the WAAF as an auxiliary service. It was also written by and for a specific audience: former WAAFs. This – much like for the *Nongqai* and *Sailor-women, Sea-women, Swans*[7] – means that the scope of information

[1] SADF Archives, "SA Forces in the Second World War," *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 19, no. 3 (1989), p. 39.
[2] Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 8, no. 4 (1999), pp. 605–624; Julie Fountain, "'The Most Interesting Work a Woman Can Perform in Wartime': The Exceptional Status of British Women Pilots during the Second World War", *Cultural and Social History* 13, no. 2 (2016), pp. 213–2129; Stephanie Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", *Paedagogica Historica* 52, no. 1–2 (2016), pp. 137–153.
[3] See: Lyuba Vinogradova, *Defending the Motherland* (London: Maclehouse Press, 2015).
[4] David Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 40, no. 3 (2013), p. 288.
[5] Weronika Grzebalska, "Between Gender Blindness and Nationalist Herstory," *Baltic Worlds* X, no. 4 (2017), pp. 72-73.
[6] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1948).
[7] As discussed in Chapter 1.

contained in this book is limited to that which former Waafs want to hear and is shrouded in nostalgia.[8] Despite these potential pitfalls, *The South African WAAF* does give good insight into the WAAF as an organisation and the experiences of the women who served therein from an almost then-contemporary perspective. The pitfalls can also be mitigated through cross-examination with other sources.

The first scholarly work on the WAAS is an article by C. Bergh about how the WAAF developed from a women's civil aviation association. The article also provides a very broad outline of the activities and conditions of service of the WAAF.[9] Finally, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945" gives a description of the history of the WAAF from the perspective of Marjorie Eagerton Bird, one of the founding members of the WAAF.[10] While all three of these texts provide useful perspectives – particularly in the cases of the two texts written by former Waafs that provide a personal lens into the WAAF – they do not address the history of the WAAF on a level that is anything more than descriptive.

What this chapter aims to do is show how the auxiliary position of the WAAF shifted as World War II progressed. Here Tessa Stone's contention that the division of military roles as masculine combat and feminine non-combat are not necessarily applicable to the Air Force will be crucial. Instead, she argues, the distinction should be made between "those who flew and those who did not, between the aircrew and the ground crew".[11] A division that – in both the RAF and the SAAF – was not purely gendered.

The creation of the WAAF as a distinct branch of the WADC will first be discussed. The organisational structure and close association with the South African Air Force (SAAF) demonstrate how the relationship between the male and female sides of the Air Force influenced the development of the WAAF. From this, the training and deployment of the Waafs will be discussed. Firstly, to show how these women were prepared to take over jobs that had previously been male preserves and how they adapted and succeeded in these new roles. Secondly, it will be demonstrated how the WAAF was able, like the WAAS, to transgress the combat taboo in Anti-Aircraft Batteries. Finally, the most significant way in which the WAAF was kept as auxiliary will be discussed in terms of flight. It will be argued that the strong

[8] Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", p. 286.
[9] C. Bergh, "Die Ontstaan Van Vrouelugverenigings in Suid-Afrika Voor Die Tweede Wereldoorlog", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 9, no. 3 (1979), pp. 24–37.
[10] Marjorie Eagerton Bird and Molly Botes, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945", *The South African Military History Society - Military History Journal* 5, no. 5 (1982), http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol055mb.html (10/9/2020)
[11] Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 610.

influence of the South African Air Force divisional identity on the WAAF rather than the structural identity of the WADC played a great role in the WAAF overcoming the combat taboo of the UDF. By 1942, the WAAF was amalgamated with the SAAF and this provided opportunities for women of the auxiliary to not only become less auxiliary but led to one section becoming the first combatant arm of the WAAF.

## 4.1 "I and the Air Force need you and need you badly": The Creation of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force

The need to use womanpower to replace men in non-combatant jobs within the UDF contributed to the creation of the both the WAAS and the WAAF. Both services grew from civilian women's organisations that were established with the intention of providing support in the coming war. While the basic pattern of origin is similar for both of these women's services, the details are not. The WAAF was a distinct unit within the WADC. The way in which it was shaped, as well as the motivation behind its creation, explain the place of the WAAF within the larger structures of the WADC and UDF but more importantly its military divisional identity as part of the SAAF.

### 4.1.1 Flying to Greater Heights: Destination WAAF

In the late 1930s, flying was becoming a not unpopular hobby, for those who could afford it. According to Stephanie Spencer, "flying implied liberation, control of the elements and modernity".[12] The celebrity of female aviators, like Amelia Earhart, became symbols of the modern world's widening of women's activity and the loosening of traditional gender barriers.[13] Despite this symbolic importance of aviatrixes, flight was not accessible to all women in all contexts.

Wealth and class played a large role in flight's accessibility to women. In the interwar period, those few women who learned to fly had to have easy access to money, time and transport. According to Julie Fountain, who has studied the development of flight as a hobby

[12] Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", p. 139.
[13] Fountain, "'The Most Interesting Work a Woman Can Perform in Wartime': The Exceptional Status of British Women Pilots during the Second World War", p. 214 & Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", p. 139.

in interwar Britain, women who took up flying had to be able to pay for the lessons, have enough spare time to spend on the airfield, and needed access to cars or motorcycles to get to the airfield.[14] In addition to these barriers, flight had a mostly recreational function (particularly for female aviators): "taken up as a hobby, or as a glamorous way to make skiing and beach trips with friends".[15] In pre-war South Africa, much the same barriers stood in the way for (white) women's aviation.

A growing number of white South African women were becoming interested in the adventure of flight. This included Marjorie Egerton-Bird. She fell in love with flying after a friend convinced her to take a "flip" in an aeroplane at Germiston Flying Club. She soon began training for her "A" pilot's licence and obtained this in 1937, becoming one of ten women in South Africa at the time to possess this qualification.[16] Despite her passion for aviation and her proven skill in the cockpit, gaining her pilot's licence came at no cheap cost; she had spent a total of £70 on her training (at a rate of £3 an hour). In contrast, (white) men interested in learning how to fly did not have to pay for their training as the South African government subsidised civilian training for men.[17]

Birdie (as she was known), was incensed at this disparity and felt that if flying rates were cheaper for women more would have the opportunity to experience the wonder of flight.[18] Thus, shortly after she had obtained her "A" pilot's licence, Egerton-Bird began her campaign to reduce flying rates for women. Despite initially being met with laughter from her (male) instructor and the secretary of the Club, Birdie was not deterred. She called upon a fellow aviatrix and instructor, Doreen Hooper to aid her in the campaign to promote female aviation. Hooper herself was an "outstanding woman flyer".[19] Hooper had obtained her "A" pilot's licence in 1935 at 18. Shortly thereafter she also received her "B" licence, which allowed her to pilot commercial aircraft. At only 20, she was one of the youngest women in the world to hold a "B" licence. In January 1938, Hooper qualified as a flying instructor, becoming not only the youngest person in the commonwealth to hold these qualifications,[20] but also the first fully

[14] Fountain, "'The Most Interesting Work a Woman Can Perform in Wartime': The Exceptional Status of British Women Pilots during the Second World War", p. 217.
[15] Fountain, "'The Most Interesting Work a Woman Can Perform in Wartime': The Exceptional Status of British Women Pilots during the Second World War", pp. 217-218.
[16] Eagerton Bird and Botes, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945".
[17] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 1. Jameson and Ashburner cite that this was most likely due to a shortage of aircraft.
[18] Eagerton Bird and Botes, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945".
[19] Eagerton Bird and Botes.
[20] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 1.

South Africa-trained woman flying instructor.[21] By November 1938, Hooper had cemented her status as "Barberton's Flying Ace" by securing podium finishes in a number of air races, often as one of the only women competing.[22] She also taught pupil pilots at Johannesburg Light Plane Club and worked as a pilot for the South Africa Flying services taking "people for joy flights to every corner of Africa".[23]

Together with four co-conspirators,[24] these two women planned a public meeting to launch a women's aviation association for South Africa. This meeting was held on 6 December 1938 at the Wanderer's Club in Johannesburg and was chaired by Mrs Denys Reitz, the Member of Parliament for Parktown, a wealthy, white suburb of Johannesburg.[25] They had expected a turnout of about 50, but when the day came found that 110 women were eager to join what would become the South African Women's Aviation Association (SAWAA), also popularly referred to as the Women's Civil Air Guard.[26] Hooper was elected as the chairwoman and Egerton-Bird as the secretary. Soon branches of the SAWAA sprang up all over South Africa: in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Pretoria, Benoni (Johannesburg), Durban, the West Rand, and Grahamstown. Each branch unit was under the leadership of a commander and, with General and Mrs. Smuts as the patrons of the Association, they continued to press government to subsidise women gaining their wings.

Through the Association, women were given a combination of "practical training, lectures and instruction".[27] Their training included: the history of flight, rigging, aero-engines, navigation, first aid, parachute-packing, stores work, aerial photography, wireless telegraphy, welding, armament, aerodrome control, transport work, despatch riding and canteen work.[28] This training was provided by instructors from Air Force regiments and were described as having a "military" quality that created a "well disciplined [*sic.*] body ready to offer their services to their country".[29] These women cut "workman-like figures in their regulation blue

[21] "Miss Doreen Hooper to give Flying Lessons", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 10/1/1938. Helen Harrison held the distinction of being the first South African woman to become a flying instructor but she completed her training in Britain.
[22] "Girls Flying Ace", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 13/4/1937 & "'Propellor Personalities' South African Women want Civil Air Guard", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 29/11/1938.
[23] "Miss Doreen Hooper to give Flying Lessons", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 10/1/1938 & "Girls Flying Ace", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 13/4/1937.
[24] These were Joan Blake, Elaine Percival-Hart, Sylvia Starfield and Toy Celliers.
[25] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 1.
[26] Eagerton Bird and Botes, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945".
[27] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 4.
[28] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 4.
[29] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAF, How the South African WAAF Originated, n.d.

overalls over weekends when they could be seen "on aerodromes and in hangars cleaning aircraft, repairing parachutes and doping wings"[30] Despite the growing presence of women on airfields around the Union, not all were happy at the thought of more female pilots. Many men at existing flying clubs were against the growing presence of women, particularly as they believed that SAWAA trainees were likely to damage engine parts![31]

Thanks in part to the growing presence of women and the continued efforts of the SAWAA, by 1939, their initial goal of securing cheaper flying rates for women had been secured. Although it took some time for the government to realise how valuable work done by SAWAA was, state recognition came in the form of an announcement that a subsidy of £25 would be paid towards training expenses of each woman who succeeded in getting her A pilot's licence in 25 hours. This was a welcome impetus for the SAWAA – more women were now financially able to take courses and several succeeded in gaining their "A" pilot's licence.[32]

While the initial call for this new venture was to get more women involved in aviation and to secure cheaper flying rates for women, Egerton-Bird and Hooper were also aware of the growing likelihood of war. As such, they also hoped that their organisation would be able to make flying women useful in the event of a national emergency.[33] This is reflected in the objectives of the SAWAA : "to release men from civil aviation in time of National Emergency; ferrying and transport work; ambulance work; flying mail and despatches, and all normal civil aviation work; charter work, urgent medical work, etc; instructing; and technical work".[34] In essence, the SAWAA wanted "to train women in flying and the handling of aircraft, ready to assist the South Africa Air Force in case of emergency".[35] In line with this mission, after their training, members of the SAWAA were expected to offer up their free weekends working at various aerodromes around the Union.[36]

As the SAWAA expanded, their training and willingness to serve was noticed by those in power. By mid-1939, with the storm-clouds of war on the horizon, plans were being drawn up to train the women of the SAWAA to supplement manpower in the UDF. Brig.-Gen. Collyer

[30] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAF, WAAF History – Brief Synopsis, n.d.
[31] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 4.
[32] SANDFA, H.P.H Behrens, "The S.A. Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No 3.
[33] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAF, Women's Auxiliary Air Force, n.d.
[34] Eagerton Bird and Botes, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945".
[35] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 2.
[36] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAF, How the South African WAAF Originated.

(then Director of Recruiting for the UDF) wrote to the heads of departments for their opinions on how these women could be incorporated into the war effort. The replies were varied and quite extensive, with Col. Holthouse (Director-General of Air Services) listing: "Typists clerical work, storemen, canteens and messes, and telephone operators, for office workers; ground wireless operators, fabric workers, painters, parachute packers and repairers, metal workers, acetylene welders, aircraft hands, despatch riders, motor transport drivers and machinists, for ground staff; instructors, communication flying and ferrying of aircraft, for pilots."[37] Much of this was already included in the training offered by the Association, the rest was included due to a shift in focus by the SAWAA itself – moving away from drawing more women into aviation to focussing ever more on ensuring that women could replace the men who were needed for combat.[38]

This outcome had always been in the back of Birdie's mind. Even before founding the SAWAA, Egerton-Bird had been "anxious about the threat of danger to her country".[39] And so, with the outbreak of war, Egerton-Brid, in her position as secretary of the SAWAA, telegraphed General Smuts stating that "The Women's Aviation Association offers its services to the Government".[40] Their offer was initially tabled – due to the primary concern of the UDF to arm its male Army and Air Force units for the impending war.

Neverthless, the first step towards the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force was taken at a SAWAA parade at the Rand Flying Club on 2 November 1939, when Director General of the Air Services announced: "The South African Air Force would welcome this Association as a Women's Volunteer Auxiliary Air Unit of the SAAF and, if they wished, this would be put into effect".[41]

The SAWAA was now repackaged as an auxiliary unit of the South African Air Force: the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). In recognition of their enthusiasm and efforts to support the Air Force, the women were allowed to wear the badges of the South African Air Force (SAAF) and the motto *ad manum* (always at hand) was adopted to further show their loyalty to their cause. However, it was only in May 1940 that this organisation was officially announced as a part of the UDF when Sir Pierre Van Ryneveld (the Chief of General Staff) announced at a parade that "I and the Air Force need you and need you badly".[42] The WAAF

[37] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 5.
[38] Eagerton Bird and Botes, "Flying High: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force 1939-1945".
[39] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 1.
[40] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF* p. 5.
[41] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 5.
[42] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAF, 'WAAF History – Brief Synopsis'.

was officially gazetted on 10 May 1940,[43] two weeks before the WAAS officially came into being. This meant that the WAAF in South Africa had officially embarked on its military career, and, apart from the Military Nursing Service, were the first women in military uniform in the country, as opposed to civilian uniform.[44]

Shortly thereafter, on 1 June 1940, Doreen Hooper became the first woman in South Africa to join the WAAF on full-time service and took command of this new body of military personnel with the rank of Major. At 22-years-old she was the youngest officer in the British Commonwealth to hold the rank of Major.[45] By 28 June, the first women called up for full-time service with the WAAF arrived at the first camp for women in Edward Street, Pretoria. These women became known as "the first one hundred" (although their numbers were in fact closer to 120).[46] Despite these remarkable achievements, SAWAA did not simply dissolve into the WAAF. To cater for women unable to enlist into the WAAF, for whatever reason, a voluntary service had to coexist.

### 4.1.2 Auxiliaries to the Auxiliary: The Women's Voluntary Air Force (WVAF)

Although the WAAF and its uniformed members were now an official part of South Africa's war machine, this did not mean that its mother organisation, the SAWAA, completely disappeared. Those women who wanted to serve the Union's war effort by joining the WAAF but who were, for whatever reason, not able to join-up for full-time service were still afforded the opportunity to enter into the broader functions of the WAAF through the Women's Voluntary Air Force (WVAF). The WVAF was created out of the remnants of the original SAWAA. Officially recognised as a branch of the WAAF in January 1941, the WVAF was essentially the "part-time WAAF".[47] WVAF members would often go on to become full-time members of the WAAF, making this branch the biggest source of recruits for the full-time WAAF service.[48]

The first members of the WVAF were drawn from the remaining numbers of the SAWAA. Those who were too young or too old for full-time military service, those who had

[43] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 6.
[44] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 319.
[45] https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/pioneer-pilot-dies-414132 (28 November 2019).
[46] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAF, WAAF History – Brief Synopsis, n.d.
[47] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 321.
[48] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 8.

family responsibilities, or those who were already employed full-time in positions replacing civilian men.[49] For example, a large contingent of the WVAF were civil-servants, teachers and others "who cannot be released for full-time service and who, by their spirit and loyal co-operation, act as recruiting agents for the WAAF".[50]

These women were not only responsible for recruitment for the WAAF but also fulfilled a number of auxiliary positions to the WAAF – taking over many of the secondary tasks necessary for the continued smooth running of its mother service.

There was a total of 12 WVAF commands spread throughout the Union. Here, during their spare-time, they ran canteens, crèches and service clubs for the WAAF, organised entertainments like dances, visited hospitals and even took a hand in local fire fighting.[51] Some also did part-time work as signallers on Air Stations or took on search-light duties at the coast.[52] Furthermore, they attended "weekly military parades, and, by their smartness and *esprit de corps*, [helped] in disciplining and smartening up the new recruit until she [could] be taken on for full-time service".[53]

Perhaps the best valued – at least to the WAAFs themselves in the spirit of camaraderie – was the WVAF toy-making section which was charged with raising funds for the war effort. Described as a "lucrative aid" providing moneys to various funds,[54] the toy making section was specifically focused on keeping the money raised within the WAAF family. Much of the money raised was allocated to looking after those WAAFs who needed help re-establishing themselves once the War had ended.[55] Before this had come to pass, the toy section also provided interested members of both the WAAF and WVAF with a craft that could be of some use when they returned to civilian life.[56]

Although both the WVAF and the SAWAS served their military sisters – the WAAF and WAAS, respectively – in similar ways, especially in terms of recruitment and membership, there was one crucial difference between them. Although many WAAS members were initially drawn from SAWAS (much as WVAF members became WAAFs), the SAWAS always

[49] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 8.
[50] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 9.
[51] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 321. & Jameson and Ashburner, p. 9.
[52] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 321.
[53] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 9.
[54] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 321.
[55] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 9.
[56] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 321.

remained a separate organisation. Despite its close links to the WAAS, the SAWAS was a purely civilian organisation. In contrast, the WVAF was part of the WAAF.[57] The differentiation was largely to distinguish between those who served as full-time members of the WAAF and part-time, reserve members of the WVAF. Their organisational structure also differed.

## 4.2 "Having considerably altered the original pattern": Organisational Structure of WAAF, 1940-1944

As the first uniformed women members of the UDF, the WAAF had no guide on which to model their organisational structure and regulations. Instead, they adapted the existing military disciplinary code of the SAAF to create the WAAF Regulations "having considerably altered the original pattern to fit a women's organisation".[58] The fast and ongoing adaptation of existing military codes to suit the needs of a female body is best captured by Jameson and Ashburner as being in a "fluid state gradually crystallising".[59] As a military body, WAAF members were organised in ranks under a commanding officer, who was in turn responsible to the Director General of the Air Force.[60] As with the Air Force, WAAF personnel were organised by rank. These personnel were further grouped into Headquarters staff and officers, Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and Airwomen "as may be required for employment in posts on the authorised establishments of the SAAF".[61]

The "authorised establishments" where the WAAF served were SAAF commands, stations or units to which members of the WAAF were posted, when required. Here the established system of command held fast: the officer in charge of the local WAAF unit – the OC WAAF[62] – was responsible for "the efficiency, discipline, well-being and training (where practicable) of all ranks of her detachment".[63] She was in turn under the command of the OC

[57] Although, it should perhaps be noted that in much of the archival documentation concerning recruiting, the SAWAS and WVAF are put forward as equivalent organisations.
[58] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 13.
[59] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 15.
[60] Bergh, "Die Ontstaan Van Vrouelugverenigings in Suid-Afrika Voor Die Tweede Wereldoorlog", p. 27.
[61] SANDFA, Pamphlets: WW2: Woman's Contribution, Regulations for the Women's Auxiliary Air Services, 1941, p. 1.
[62] According to the wording of the official WAAF regulations: "An OC WAAF Details is an officer of the WAAF appointed by the Director Air Personnel and Organisation to be in charge of a detachment of WAAF and exercises disciplinary powers in terms WAAF regulations" (SANDFA, Pamphlets: WW2: Woman's Contribution, Regulations for the Women's Auxiliary Air Services, 1941, p. 6)
[63] SANDFA, Pamphlets: WW2: Woman's Contribution, Regulations for the Women's Auxiliary Air Services, 1941, p. 1.

SAAF – the officer in charge of the SAAF unit to which the WAAF members were seconded.[64] The OC WAAF was essentially the direct link between the WAAF and the SAAF.[65] In addition, she had to "see that the women did their work properly. More than anything she had to guard against favouritism and injustice where women work alongside men".[66] The OC WAAF was often called the "Queen Bee" – all OC Units and heads of Sections looked to OC WAAF for advice in handling Waafs and in all WAAF-related matters.[67]

*The* "Queen Bee" was Maj. (Mrs) Doreen Dunning (née Hooper), the first Officer Commanding of the WAAF.[68] In 1941, she was promoted to the Air Force rank of Wing Officer. During her tenure as OC of the WAAF, Dunning's influence was widely felt. Not only was she responsible for the smooth running of WAAF and overseeing the management of its members, she had also been instrumental in drafting the regulations for both the WAAF and WAAS constitutions in December 1940.

Despite her influence as founding head of the SAWAA and as OC of the WAAF, Dunning's tenure was not without controversy. After only three months as head of the WAAF, calls came from the Department of Defence to transfer Dunning to another branch. The authorities reportedly felt that at 23 years old she was too young to command the WAAF and that she should "give way to an older woman" with more experience.[69] However, Dunning was supported by her own troops who did not feel that her lack of years equated lack of experience of command. In the editor's column of *The Rand Daily Mail* of 15 October 1940, the Waafs were described as being loyal to Dunning and as admiring her "able and unselfish leadership".[70] Support also came from the public. This is reflected in a series of letters to the editor of *The Rand Daily Mail* in October 1940 written in response to his piece entitled "Youth Will Always Conquer". These articles supported the idea that Dunning should be allowed to continue to command the unit that she created.[71] Evidently this public preassure was successful and Dunning remained OC WAAF until retiring from her position at the end of October 1943; a

[64] SANDFA, WADC, Box 3, DR(W)F H10-3 Regulations and Instructions WAAF, Department of Defence Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 27/12/1940.
[65] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 19.
[66] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 20.
[67] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 21.
[68] On 16 November 1940, Doreen Hooper married 2nd Lt. Edwin Kieth ("Joe") Dunning of the SAAF, a fellow pilot whom she had met while serving as a flying instructor for the SAWAA at at Baragwanath Air Field.
[69] "Youth Will Always Conquer", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 15/10/1940.
[70] "Major Hooper's Foresight", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 19/10/1940.
[71] "Youth Entitled to its Chance", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 16/10/1940; "Major Hooper's Foresight", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 19/10/1940; "No One More Fitted to Command", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 24/10/1940.

little over a year after her counterpart in the WAAS, Lt. Col. Lugenburg, also retired from her post.

It is not clear from the archival record exactly why she handed in her resignation other than a brief note in an official history of the WAAF which states that this "great loss" was triggered by "a disagreement" in WAAF policy between her and the Director General of the Air Force.[72] Welding, in her thesis about the success of the WAAS as a part of South Africa's World War II effort, claims that the disagreement was based on the Director General of the WAAF, unbeknownst to Dunning, recalling the placement of a WAAF captain.[73] She felt that this undermined her authority. It is unlikely that one isolated incident led to this drastic decision. The departure of two leading female figures in the space to two years and who both fought relentlessly to have their auxiliaries recognised cannot be entirely coincidental.

News of Dunning's apparently sudden retirement soon reached the ears of the highest military figure in South Africa, Jan Smuts. At a sitting of parliament in April 1944, an incensed but misinformed Smuts accused both Dunning and Lugtenburg of retiring from their positions without permission. This was considered a breach of military protocol that he would never have tolerated from any male officer.[74] The League of Women Voters, however, soon corrected the Prime Minister's blunder informing him that both women had, in fact, followed the necessary protocols and resigned with permission. Smuts capitulated, sending Dunning (and Lugtenburg) a letter expressing his "regret about a statement that was made inadvertently, and under a mistaken impression of the facts".[75] He added that: "I thought too highly of of both you and Colonel Lugtenburg to have intentionally cast any reflection on either of you".[76] However, no official retraction was ever made in parliament.[77] Nor is there evidence to suggest that the reasons for these retirements were ever probed.

After Dunning's "retirement", Major Muriel Horrell took over her duties.[78] However, as was the case after the retirement of Lugtenburg from the WAAS, the title of Officer Commanding was suspended in the WAAF. Evidence therefore strongly suggests that while many inroads were made in achieving some position and recognition for rank and file women into the military structure, at a command level, upwardly mobile and vocal women were

[72] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 162, Narep Unfo 16, Units and Formations WAAF, Women's Auxiliary Air Force, n.d.
[73] Susanna Maria Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog" (Master's thesis, University of Pretoria, 1990), p. 39.
[74] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 17.
[75] "Gen. Smuts Makes Homourable Amends to Mrs Dunning", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 19/8/1944.
[76] "Gen. Smuts Makes Homourable Amends to Mrs Dunning", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 19/8/1944.
[77] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 40
[78] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 18.

expected to maintain the gender thresholds. The pay discrepancies between men and women and the correlation between higher disparity with higher rank presented in Chapter 2, attests to the financial ways in which women were to remain subordinate in the military.

In this instance, Lugtenberg and Dunning appeared to have ruffled the feathers of some of the top brass, the bastions upholding the "brass ceiling". The fact that Dunning was close to Smuts and that Smuts himself, albeit erroneously, admonished them publicly, suggests that they were in fact invaluable to certain members of the UDF and this would have made others, invariably uncomfortable.

For Dunning, however, in stark contrast to Lugtenberg's WAAS which remained an auxiliary under the WADC and WAAS, the WAAFs were eventually amalgamated into the SAAF a year before her retirement. Dunning's departure and the subsequent suppression of her rank title, could very well have been the casualty of this bitter-sweet amalgamation in which an inevitable leadership struggle would have unfolded. Attention will now shift to this organisational evolution.

## 4.3 Growth and stagnation of the WAAF, 1940-1942

The delight of the "first one hundred" at finally being full-time members of the UDF meant that in the first two years of the WAAF's existence the service went from strength to strength. The service grew quickly from the already established members of the SAWAA; with the majority of the "first one hundred" being called up directly from SAWAA branches across the Union. They are described by Jameson and Ashburner, as follows:

> The train which arrived in Pretoria station on 28th June 1940, had picked up en route singing, laughing, shouting groups of the first WAAFs, still in their [SAWAA] blue dungaree uniforms, delighted to be allowed to join up at last.[79]

The delight at being called up was not a short-lived blip riding on the novelty of a newly created women's service but was maintained for the first two years of the WAAF's existence. This is demonstrated by recruitment figures: recruitment between January 1941 and June 1942, for example, averaged at 341 new recruits per month.[80]

[79] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 8.
[80] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 9. These figures would later diminish for a number of reasons, as discussed below.

The combination of fast-growing numbers and quick recognition of the WAAF's potential as an untapped reservoir of (wo)manpower, meant that the military powers visualised using even more women in the place of men within the SAAF.[81] The potential membership of the WAAF was extended in September 1942 when a further call for increased WAAF numbers was announced by the Director of Air Personnel. This was in line with the new policy that stated that "male members of the South African Air Force should, wherever possible, be replaced by members of the women's Auxiliary Air Force".[82]

Despite this enthusiasm for replacing SAAF airmen with members of the WAAF "wherever possible", the initial mass of enthusiasm for joining the WAAF diminished. Much like the rest of the WADC and the UDF, the WAAF was affected by a recruiting crisis. By June 1942, recruitment figures for the WAAF had dropped to an average of only 125 per month – less than half of previous enrolments.[83]

Jameson and Ashburner in their history of the WAAF point to a shift in policy that occurred in mid-1942 as another reason for this sudden drop in numbers. In June 1942, the Director of Recruiting Colonel GCG Werdmuller took over all recruiting matters for the WAAF and WAAS. Jameson and Ashburner allude to his dual position as both Director of Recruiting and head of the WAAS despite his supposed impartiality.[84] Furthermore, many WAAFs felt that this was an unnecessary administrative change and that recruiting had been better managed by themselves and the WVAF.[85]

There were a number of other possible reasons for the overall ebb in recruitment – especially in the context of the larger recruitment crisis that the UDF as a whole experienced from 1942 onwards.[86] As the WAAF became larger, practical considerations prevented women from joining who might otherwise have felt the call to service. The first of these was that there was only one training camp for the WAAF. This meant that all WAAF recruits had to travel to Valhalla camp in Pretoria for their initial training. Not all were willing to make this journey; and many joined the WAAS instead as they offered more locations where training could be received.[87]

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[81] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 9.
[82] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera. Untitled memo dated 11/6/1941.
[83] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 11.
[84] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 11.
[85] Bergh, "Die Ontstaan Van Vrouelugverenigings in Suid-Afrika Voor Die Tweede Wereldoorlog", p. 28.
[86] As discussed in Chapter 2.
[87] Bergh, "Die Ontstaan Van Vrouelugverenigings in Suid-Afrika Voor Die Tweede Wereldoorlog", p. 28.

The issue of travelling was compounded by the growing scarcity of accommodation. The situation in Kimberley illustrates this difficulty well. In 1941, an Air Training School, a Cape Corps Camp and a Pay Corps section were established at Kimberley. This meant that "accommodation of any description [was] at a premium" in this town.[88] The UDF struggled to find accommodation for both male and female personnel but finding suitable accommodation for the WAAFs was particularly difficult. Local civilians were apparently unwilling to host airwomen in their homes;[89] although no clear indication is given in the archival record as to why this was the case. Perhaps one should be reminded that there was no overarching acceptance of South Africa entering the war in support of Britain. Opening one's home for billeted military personel would be read as supporting the war effort. This rejection may not be directed specifically at women from the WAAF but for all those attached to the military structure. Kimberley is situated in the Northern Cape near the boarder of the former Boer republic of the Orange Free State. It was one of the more contested spaces during the South African War, 1899-1902. If there was to be an outward display rejecting the war effort, it would take place in areas such as this. Again, not all shared the same sentiment. After an advertisement was placed in the local press calling for offers of board and lodging for WAAF members, one person did reply, offering board and lodging to two girls.[90]

With the option of private homes unavailable, the issue was compounded by the fact that there were long waiting lists at the local boarding houses. In addition to these long waiting lists, not just any boarding house would suffice. It was felt that "it will not be in the best interests of the girls to accommodate them in second rate licensed Hotels".[91] The reasoning behind this added barrier towards finding accommodation for the Waafs is partly based in the same paternalistic attitudes experienced within the WAAS. For the Waasies, great pains were taken by those in command to free the women's barracks from the historical view that these were "the least appropriate place for young women".[92] For the WAAF, making sure that their housing was of a better standard than "second rate licensed Hotels",[93] could have ensured a

[88] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera, Urgent letter to Secretary for Social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF, 16/6/1941.
[89] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera, Urgent letter to Secretary for Social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF, 16/6/1941.
[90] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera, Urgent letter to Secretary for Social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF, 16/6/1941.
[91] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera, Urgent letter to Secretary for Social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF, 16/6/1941.
[92] Chetty, "Our Victory Was Our Defeat: Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945", (PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006), p. 114.
[93] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera. Urgent letter to Secretary for Social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF, 16/6/1941

more comfortable or "homely" – and therefore more safely feminine – environment. The same concern – keeping women's barracks separated from male living quarters – was of paramount importance for the WAAS high command, as discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, one cannot ignore that historically, the women of the WAAF were of a higher economic class of person who had to pay, for example, for her flight training. While female sexuality was being "safeguarded" by the UDF, some women's virtue would have been more in need of protection than others.

It is here that the notion of protecting white women's virtues on the part of the state, requires brief explanation. At the turn of the 20th century, fears of sexual impropriety and immorality culminated in the Commission of Enquiry into the Assaults of Women in 1913.[94] A rich plethora of literature explains how perceived sexual immorality between the races, the role of prostitutes and the unfounded fear of black men's insatiable desire to sleep with white women resulted in types of white women in need of saving and others in need of protection. Here, the class of white women framed the discussion.[95] This fear and subsequent categories of perpetrator and hierarchy of victims have permeated the racial discourse in South Africa for much of the 20th century.

Protecting gendered divisions of accommodation was not the only issue that compounded the WAAF's accommodation struggles; correct racial divisions also had to be maintained. This was highlighted in the complaints about one boarding house called York House. Here, according to a letter to the Secretary for Social Welfare regarding living accommodations for Waafs in Kimberley, the proprietor apparently left "too much to the Non-European employees and does not exercise proper supervision".[96] This mirrors the anxieties felt by the larger WADC – in terms of the maintenance of racial barriers – that led to the creation of the WAMPC as a way to "protect" white women from fears of the *swartgevaar* of black male sexuality.

These accommodation issues meant that many potential service women were lost as they were only called for on a daily basis as their services were required rather than working full-time. In addition to this, many women had travelled from rural areas to enlist in the cities meaning that they had to provide for themselves until they were finally called-up for service.

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[94] UG 39-1913, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Assaults on Women (Pretoria, 1913).
[95] See: Timothy Keegan, "Gender, Degeneration and Sexual Danger: Imagining Race and Class in South Africa, ca.1912", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (2001), pp. 459–477.
[96] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera, Urgent letter to Secretary for Social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF, 16/6/1941.

At the WAAF command in Vereeniging this was tangible.[97] Here the WAAF establishment consisted of one officer, four NCOs and 30 details. Of this 35, eleven women did not have accommodation in the town and had to travel in every day "from Johannesburg by troop carrier with a driver lent by Johannesburg".[98]

In addition to these issues of travelling distance and accommodation, issues of surrounding the lower pay rates of the UDF compared to civilian work kept many women away from service in the WADC as a whole.[99] The WAAF competed with other women's auxiliary services for recruits. Not only were they challenged by the other branches of the WADC, but they also faced competition from British women's services. Rather than enlisting in the WAAF, some adventurous women chose instead to join the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY).[100]

For young South African women, the draw of FANY was the promise of active service abroad and the romance of adventure that went along with it. Jameson and Ashburner describe the complaints of one disgruntled WAAF recruiting officer "that South African girls actually passed the door of her office to join the FANYs because they realised there was a chance of going North on active service, even though they knew", as she put it, "the pay was about half'".[101] Cleary, payscale was not the only motivating factor. There was a deep passion for flying and being of service.

The yearning for adventure was also not unique to South Africa. As pointed out by Summerfield, many young British women who entered into the auxiliary services were "less keen to do what were seen as traditional female jobs".[102] For South African women, FANY offered a more active way to enter wartime service.

Practical concerns of accommodation and pay alongside some women's desire for adventure were felt in the sharp decrease in WAAF recruitment. The sudden decrease in numbers had a significant impact on the SAAF's policy of close co-operation with their female counterparts. By the middle of the War, the service was "nearing the end of the supply of WAAF recruits" as pointed out by the Director of Air Personnel.[103]

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[97] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera. Urgent Letter to Secretary for social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF: Vereeniging, 30/6/1941.
[98] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera. Urgent Letter to Secretary for social Welfare: Living Accommodation: WAAF: Vereeniging, 30/6/1941.
[99] This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.
[100] The FANY was a female motorised ambulance corps that had been established in Britain during World War I and continued its work during World War II.
[101] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 11.
[102] Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", p. 141.
[103] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 17.

The rise and fall in recruitment for the WAAF mirrors that of the WAAS. The initial fast growth of the service and the decision to use these women "wherever possible" points to a recognition that the wide-scale use of women would be useful not only to the larger war effort but particularly to the SAAF. Historically female military service has been seen as an oddity. According to Bourke, the use of women in military service is something reserved for times of absolute crisis; like World War II.[104] The limited use of women in times of crisis had also been set up to preserve the dichotomy between male and female.[105] For the WAAF, as with the other branches of the WADC, this was a little different and it could be argued that this need to preserve the differences between men and women negatively impacted recruiting.

The stagnation in WAAF recruiting numbers was not only due to the larger recruiting crisis that was also experienced by the WAAS and the UDF as a whole, but was also significantly impacted by other, more specific factors. Feminine, homely accommodation that was kept safely away from the supposed dangers of black male sexuality and the maintenance of lower pay rates enforced the women's protected but secondary status. Despite these gendered differences, which meant that women's and men's experiences were different,[106] the WAAF and the SAAF maintained their working relationship.

## 4.4 Joined at the Wing: The influence of the WAAF's Close Association with the SAAF

For the South African military authorities, the WAAF was an integral part of the SAAF. However, the SAWAA had originally been built up as a separate organisation and, initially, they wanted to retain this unique identity and control their own training and conditions of appointment; in other words, to "carry the SAWAA into the Air Force".[107] However, this was not possible. With the (re)creation of the WAAF as an official military body, this independence was lost. In its place, a strong bond formed between the WAAF and SAAF. In essence, the WAAF was "carried into" the Air Force. It is, therefore, important to investigate the close association between the male and female sections of South Africa's Air Force because this has implications for the broader WADC structural identity, discussed in Chapter 2, and the divisional identity imbued by the SAAF.

[104] Joanna Bourke: *An Intimate History of Killing*, (London and New York: Granta Press, 1999), p. 324.
[105] Jennifer. G. Mathers: "Women and State Military Forces" in *Women and Wars*, C. Cohn (ed.), p. 131.
[106] Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict* (Combridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014), p. 48.
[107] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 13.

The bond between the male and female sides of the Air Force in South Africa had been strong since the inception of the SAWAA. The policy of "close co-operation between SAAF and WAAF" was not simply an idle expression. This became official in June 1942, at the peak of the recruitment crisis and divisions competed for recruits. At a regimental dinner celebrating the second anniversary of the WAAF, it was announced that the WAAF and SAAF would be amalgamated and cease to act as separate entities. Mrs Denys Reitz stated that she "hoped that the amalgamation with the men would give the women the chance to prove their efficiency and show the men what they could do".[108]

Due to this strong bond between the male and female branches of the Air Force, the use of women "wherever possible" in the broader sense of the term, was made official. Based on recommendations from the Employment Board, it was decided that 34% of the SAAF personnel would be replaced by WAAFs, in September 1942.[109] The authorities were still not satisfied, and this was soon adjusted to 45%.[110] However due to the stagnation of WAAF recruiting coupled with the larger UDF recruitment crisis, this could not be achieved.

Nevertheless, the policy of large-scale replacement and the amalgamation of the SAAF and WAAF did have a significant impact on the ratio of men to women in the Air Force. There were seven airmen to every airwoman. This was the lowest male to female ratio between the men's and women's branches of the UDF. The army, by comparison, numbered 9:1 and the SANF 30:1.[111]

This strong association between the female and male sections of the Air Force was not unique to the UDF of World War II. In England, there existed a similar bond between the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF). It has, for example, been noted by historian of women and women's education Stephanie Spencer, that "the RAF was the only service where the women's section developed alongside the men's. The WRAF was first founded in 1918 in the same year as the RAF, although women remained as non-combatant ground crew".[112] The WRAF was reformed on 28 June 1939 as the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. [113] As in South Africa, British officers and airmen were replaced by women in a wide

[108] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "WAAF and SAAF amalgamated", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 5/6/942.
[109] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 16.
[110] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 17.
[111] These ratios were calculated by the author.
[112] Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", p. 139.
[113] Spencer, p. 142.

variety of non-combatant, ground-crew roles thereby releasing men for essential combatant duties and flying.

The WAAF in Britain was well-integrated into its male service, both practically and symbolically.[114] This was not a separate service but fell almost completely under the wing of the RAF in terms of administration and organisation. Here, the women of the WAAF and the men of the RAF lived and worked side-by-side. What this meant, according to Tessa Stone, is that the workplaces of the British Air Force were thoroughly integrated: "the majority of servicewomen were in direct substitution for men on a one for one basis, including in some of the skilled, technical trades".[115] The same could be argued in Souh Africa.

Despite the failure of the replacement policy to meet its ultimate goals, the close association between the local WAAF and the SAAF shows that the airwomen were seen as being valuable personnel. Although their roles were gendered differently,[116] the male and female sides of the Air Force were very closely integrated, as they were in Britain. This meant that at the Waafs adopted the military divisional identity of the SAAF.

## 4.5 Learning to Swing the Propellers: Training

The general requirements for attestation with the WAAF were overall much the same as for the WADC as a whole. Those women who chose to join the WAAF had to be white women between the ages of 18 and 41 with a minimum education of Standard VI.[117] However, for specific positions exceptions were made. In the case of volunteers for artisan positions in the WAAF, schooling up to Standard V was stipulated. It was, however, noted in a memorandum sent out to all heads of recruiting in November 1941 that "volunteers must be intelligent enough to assimilate the training they receive".[118] This requirement reflects a similar desire by the WADC to only enlist "the very best candidates".[119] The requirements for the WAAF were, therefore, aligned with those of the larger WADC. The aptitude of the attestees was, however, not enough to transform these civilian women into members of a military

[114] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 606.
[115] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", pp. 606-607.
[116] Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict*, p. 48.
[117] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Vol 1, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 13/11/1941.
[118] SANDFA, WADC, Box 87, AS 71 Recruiting Procedure General Rules, Vol 1, Recruiting: Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps, 13/11/1941.
[119] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, RG(W)F 1 WAAS Courses, WAAS Efficiency Course, 19/7/1941.

service. As noted in Chapter 3, basic training was necessary to render the recruits "fit, efficient, resilient, whatever their intended role",[120] to ensure that they would become key cogs in the larger war machine. Through training, civilians became soldiers.[121]

Upon their arrival in Pretoria, the new WAAF recruits would be met at the train station and taken to the main WAAS Camp at Voortrekkerhoogte. Here they would spend their first night in the services before moving to the main WAAF Camp at Valhalla.[122] Under the guidance of the reception officer – who was present to sort out "their troubles"[123] – the fledgling Waafs were provided with the necessary kit, block numbers and identity discs.

It was at the main WAAF camp – first based in Edward Street and, from 1941, at Valhalla Camp in Roberts Heights – where recruits received their first training. Their first steps towards becoming airwomen was to learn the basics of regimental drill. At Valhalla lectures were offered to ground them in "all the subjects a member of the Air Force needs to know".[124] An article in the *Nonqgai* about the history of the WAAF as a regiment highlights "WAAF Regulations, Compliments and Saluting, and Instructions for Dress" as key lectures.[125] Much of the initial training stressed aspects of discipline, obedience, personal cleanliness and hygiene, and neatness.[126] To show their understanding of the rules and regulations of the Air Force, the recruits had to pass written and oral exams of WAAF Regulations, Dress Regulations, Redress of Grievances, and the South African Air Force Organisational structure.[127] A similar syllabus and testing system was used in the British WAAF.[128]

During their three weeks of basic training, WAAF recruits were also instructed on the various trades that the WAAF offered. Once recruits had mastered military drill and discipline at the main camp they were transferred to the trade "which is congenial and for which they are suited".[129] The decision to join a certain trade did not rest solely with the recruit's preference. Previous experience and training were taken into account (particularly in the case of clerical

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[120] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), p. 43.
[121] Patricia M. Shields, "Dynamic Intersection of Military and Society", in *Handbook of Military Sciences*, ed. A. Sookermany, 2020, p. 8.
[122] An Air Force Base, located in the Pretoria suburb of the same name.
[123] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 9.
[124] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 9.
[125] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force"in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 320.
[126] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 35.
[127] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 35.
[128] *The Book of the WAAF: A Practical Guide to the Women's Branch of the RAF* (London: The Amalgamated Press, 1942), p. 16. See also: Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p. 45.
[129] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 320.

staff, to save on training needs), as was their aptitude for the work. This was assessed during the interview that potential recruits underwent upon volunteering. A similar process was used in the British WAAF.[130]

Psychological testing was used in several air forces during World War II – including the United States, Great Britain and South Africa – to test the aptitude of airmen for flying.[131] Potential SAAF pilots were given standardised tests to measure their abilities, temperament and personality, and intelligence in order to determine whether or not he would make a suitable pilot.[132] This meant that "much time is saved which would otherwise have been taken up while he was being trained for something which he could never do".[133] While the women of the WAAF were not tested as extensively (as their role within the SAAF was not to take over flying roles but to ease pressure in terms of ground crew manpower), a degree of this psychological examination was present in the interviews conducted upon volunteering due to the close relationship between the WAAF and SAAF.

As with the WAAS, after basic training was completed the Waafs who went into specialised technical Air Force work underwent further training. In the event that the duties of the WAAS and WAAF would overlap, joint training sessions were held.[134]

As much of this training has been discussed in Chapter 3, the focus here will be on training that was unique to the WAAF. In particular, the focus will be on training for work within the Air Force that had not been undertaken by women before: artisans and mechanics.

The first large-scale specialised training courses were opened to meet the acute demand for artisans in the SAAF. In February 1941, the first 150 women began training as aircraft artisans.[135] Over the course of eight to 12 weeks, the women were given instruction at Pretoria Technical College in trades that included: "fitters, welders, carpenters, sheet metal workers, electricians, instrument repairers, turners and machinists".[136] After completing their specialised training, artisans were then posted to Air Depots and in military workshops as needed. Some also took the opportunity to gain further technical qualifications; moving to the large Air Force Training Schools.

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[130] *The Book of the WAAF: A Practical Guide to the Women's Branch of the RAF*, p. 16.
[131] See: Marcia E Holmes, "The Psychologist and the Bombardier : The Army Air Forces' Aircrew Classification Program in WWII", *Endeavour* 38, no. 1 (2013), pp. 43–54.
[132] SANDFA, "Psychology in the Air Force", in *Nongqai*, July 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No. 7, pp. 649-650.
[133] SANDFA, "Psychology in the Air Force", in *Nongqai*, July 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No. 7, p. 649.
[134] Welding, "Die Geskiedenis van Die Vroue-Landmag Hulpdiens Gedurende Die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", p. 26.
[135] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Women As Aircraft Artisans Training Scheme Inaugurated", *The Cape Times*, 1/2/1941.
[136] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 319.

This was the first training scheme for women of its kind in South Africa and so was not without its difficulties regarding the integration of the airwomen into the College. The "normal work" of the College had to "proceed unaffected by this new development", and so the women were given separate workshops and classroom accommodation "to provide the best working arrangements".[137] Despite their training being kept separate from the mainstream civilian classes at the College, the female artisan trainees made a success of their new venture. Much to the chagrin of their male colleagues on the artisan course, it was the women who tended to gain the higher marks.[138] This demonstrated the "suitability of women for all types of artisan work", and was even commended in the pages of the *Nongqai* in 1944, a magazine which previously latched on to any opportunity to portray these women as unworthy of serving in the military.[139]

It was initially thought that this scheme would provide the Union with an additional 3 000 woman artisans a year. The South African military authorities believed that "women [could] be trained to undertake almost any kind of trade for the military and the scheme thus [held] great promises for future developments".[140] However, these promises were never fully realised. Ironically, this was not the result of a turnabout on the part of the Air Force, but rather a lack of interest in this type of work. As pointed out in the *Nongqai*, "unfortunately, these women were never granted proficiency pay, as in the case of men engaged in similar work, and their wages compared badly with those of civilian women munition workers".[141]

In April 1943, recruitment for female artisans stopped and no further aircraft artisan courses were presented. Those who had already been trained would "continue to perform work which [was] of vital importance to the county's war effort" but the artisan trade suffered a shortage of womanpower – those who remained had to work "long and tiring hours" to keep up with the demand for their skills.[142]

Although aircraft artisan training ended in 1943, there were a number of other specialised training courses that WAAF members could take. Early in 1942 "an avenue of

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[137] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Women As Aircraft Artisans Training Scheme Inaugurated", *The Cape Times*, 1/2/1941.
[138] Jennifer Crwys-Williams, *A Country at War 1939-1945: Mood of a Nation* (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing, 1992), p. 226.
[139] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 319.
[140] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Women As Aircraft Artisans Training Scheme Inaugurated", *The Cape Times*, 1/2/1941.
[141] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 320.
[142] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 320.

employment for women hitherto scarcely exploited by any of the Allied nations" was opened for the WAAF.[143] Women were now to be trained as flight mechanics.

After a ten-week basic training course where the trainee mechanics received "general instruction in engineering tools and processes", the women were transferred to one of the "big flying school[s]" for their training as flight mechanics.[144] This training course lasted 16 weeks. The course had two streams: engine trainees and air-frame trainees. Those in the engine section first learned about the different types of aircraft engine and their components before graduating to the installation of engines in "live" aircraft. During the course they would learn to "swing the propellers, start the engines, make the necessary adjustments and do maintenance inspections".[145] They were also given a thorough grounding in aerodrome procedure: the taxiing of aircraft, night flying operations and flare paths.

Air-frame trainees were initially separated from the engine section. During their branch of the course they were first instructed in the basics of woodworking – enabling the trainees to repair the wooden components of aircraft such as the wings or fuselage.[146] They were also taught the intricacies of erecting and rigging aircraft before engaging with the modern flight mechanics of hydraulic components that included the wing flaps, breaks and under-carriage legs.[147] After training a selected few were chosen to attend further training at the SA Air Force School of Aeronautical Engineering with the prospect of becoming sergeant instructors. By June 1942, the experiment of training women as flight mechanics had proven successful and the SAAF decided to train large numbers of women to undertake this work, thereby freeing men for service "Up North".

In the British WAAF, women were trained along similar lines for technical work within the RAF.[148] Skills training for the British WAAF, as in South Africa, was thorough. According to a study by Summerfield investigating wartime training programmes for women, most servicewomen who underwent training for technical jobs as mechanics found their training

[143] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "SA Girls to be Trained as Flight Mechanics", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 10/6/1942.
[144] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "SA Girls to be Trained as Flight Mechanics", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 10/6/1942.
[145] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "SA Girls to be Trained as Flight Mechanics", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 10/6/1942.
[146] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "SA Girls to be Trained as Flight Mechanics", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 10/6/1942.
[147] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "SA Girls to be Trained as Flight Mechanics", *The Rand Daily Mail*, 10/6/1942.
[148] *The Book of the WAAF: A Practical Guide to the Women's Branch of the RAF*, pp. 62-64.

"invaluable", both in terms of theory and practical skills.[149] This was true even for those who had had no previous experience or knowledge of the subject matter. In short, they exited military work with "more skills than they needed".[150] Summerfield argues that in the context of the British Armed Forces "supplying labour appropriately trained for the jobs that needed doing rather than defending gender boundaries defined by skill labels and rates of pay remained the paramount concern".[151] This is furthered by Stone, who adds that in the British WAAF manpower needs forced a "radical subversion of traditional gender roles and the assumptions on which they were founded".[152] In South Africa, the alleviation of manpower pressure within the UDF as a whole was the guiding reason for the establishment of women's auxiliary services and the training of women to take over skilled technical work in the three arms of service was meant to further this goal. This, combined with the amalgamation of the WAAF and SAAF, meant that the training of women as engineers and artisans (among other similar jobs) had much the same effect as that pointed out by Summerfield and Stone.

## 4.6 Deployment

For the WAAF, the definition of "auxiliary" is more complex than for the WAAS. Within the WAAS a stronger division can be drawn between the primary role of the male Army as combatant and the non-combatant auxiliary roles into which the Waasies were drawn. However, as pointed out by Stone, this gendered division does not hold in the context of the Air Force.[153] Instead, she posits that the distinction should instead be between "those who flew and those who did not".[154] The same division can be applied to investigate the positioning of the WAAF as an auxiliary unit; framing their work as being furthest or closest to flight.

[149] Penny Summerfield, "The Patriarchal Discourse of Human Capital: Training Women for War Work 1939-1945", *Journal of Gender Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993), n.p.
[150] Summerfield. n.p.
[151] Summerfield. "The Patriarchal Discourse of Human Capital: Training Women for War Work 1939-1945", n.p.
[152] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 607.
[153] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 610.
[154] Stone, p. 610.

### 4.6.1 Staying Grounded: WAAF Clericals Serving at Home and Abroad

As in most women's auxiliary services of World War II, both internationally and within the WADC, the majority of positions filled by the women of the WAAF were administrative. The first work done by the WAAF was mostly of a clerical nature, with a number of women also taking on the job of motor transport drivers.[155] This was also the section of the Air Force where the proposed large-scale replacement of male SAAF personnel by WAAF members could most easily be realised. And, to a large degree it was; so much so that "WAAF replaced SAAF in every branch of SAAF administration".[156]

As with their sisters in the WAAS, WAAF secretaries and clericals saw themselves as integral to the smooth running of the Air Force. In every branch of SAAF administration, WAAF replaced SAAF. At General Headquarters, WAAF members worked as administrative staff for both the SAAF and for the WAAF – keeping both organisations running smoothly. Waafs "could be heard tapping away in every SAAF office all over the Union and the Middle-East" - such was the presence of WAAF clericals.[157] The WAAF was also responsible for registries and records offices. Essentially it was the WAAF who compiled the orders. Furthermore, WAAF clericals were stationed in a variety of Air Force sections: Movement Control (air, land and sea), Transport Sections, military Post Offices, and Pay Offices.[158] The WAAF was not only in charge of the typing and filing of documents but also served as secretaries: a WAAF personal assistant was assigned to each senior SAAF and RAF officer in South Africa and "Up North". She, in essence, served as his private assistant.[159]

The only Waafs to be sent "Up North" were those serving in a clerical capacity, starting in September 1942. Here they reportedly did "magnificent work" at Middle East Headquarters in Cairo.[160] However, their numbers were limited. The upper limit for the WAAF establishment in the Middle East was capped at 50 WAAFs with a further 65 seconded to the RAF.[161] According to a personal account of her time in the WAAF by Airwoman Ethel Price (an aero-mechanic), recorded in *A Country at War* by Jennifer Crwys-Williams, this limitation was not readily accepted by the Waafs at home:

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[155] SANDFA, H.P.H Behrens, "The S.A. Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No 3, n.p.
[156] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 48.
[157] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 48.
[158] Jameson and Ashburner, pp. 48-49.
[159] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 48.
[160] H. J Martin and Niel D. Orpen, *South Africa at War: Preparations And Operations On The Home Front* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1979), p. 287.
[161] Martin and Orpen, p 288.

> We women begged to be allowed to go Up North, but we weren't allowed to. It caused a lot of ill feeling. Smuts told us that every woman working at home freed two men for Up North, so I suppose it was a compliment.[162]

### 4.6.2 "It is a man's job that women are going to take over": The use of WAAF Technicals to replace men

The women of the WAAF were determined to show that they could play a bigger role and by "sheer determination and efficiency, impressed senior (male) officers to such an extent that the scope of activities increased more and more".[163] Waafs were deployed in many roles behind the lines and behind the scenes. By 1942 the "Women of the WAAF [were] playing an ever-increasing part in the maintenance of the Union's air stations".[164] As more women completed their training – both basic and more specialised – the variety of operations that women undertook grew. These women "[shared] the work of the men in workshops, offices, photographic darkrooms, wireless operating rooms and on the tarmac".[165] Through this expanding sphere of deployment, the women of the WAAF contributed to the running of the Air Force in other substantial ways. Much of the work that the WAAF undertook, outside of the sphere of traditionally feminine work, was fundamental to the continued functioning of the Air Force as a service but removed from its core function: flight. Although their work remained auxiliary as it was secondary to flight, a large proportion of it took place within the arena of masculine work. In fact, the women of the WAAF took on a number of jobs within the Air Force that had previously only been executed by male ground crew. These included but were by no means limited to: refuelling aircraft; working as artisans, toolists and mechanics, operating wireless communication systems, packing parachutes and even as instructors to the men of the SAAF.

Starting in 1942, women started being used in the refuelling of aircraft. These women were versed in the different types of fuel used by different kinds of aeroplane. Once a plane had taxied to a standstill, it was to duty of the refuelling crew to back their fuel truck accurately

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[162] Crwys-Williams, *A Country at War 1939-1945: Mood of a Nation*, p. 228.
[163] SANDFA, H.P.H Behrens, "The S.A. Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No 3, n.p.
[164] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star*, 28/8/1942.
[165] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star*, 28/8/1942.

into position and refuel the plane as quickly and efficiently as possible.[166] By 1942, the aim was to have 200 more trained women to "release men now employed on refuelling at air stations all over the Union".[167]

This type of work was essential to the continued functioning of the SAAF and as a secondary service to the Air Force remained within the realm of the auxiliary. What makes the inclusion of women into this role significant in terms of the movement of the *Springdoes* beyond traditional conceptions of female auxiliary military service is that they were the first women in South Africa to undertake the task of refuelling aircraft. According to an article about the growth of WAAF work, many SAAF officers "warmly praised" the fast adaptation of the Waafs to this new work.[168] The general sentiment was: "If only we had more women as good as some who are now here, we could release as many men to go North".[169] The veiled surprise at the women showing aptitude for work that they had never before undertaken shows that, not only did the women fare well in their new roles, but in so doing they surpassed the warped gendered expectations of their abilities.

The same note of surprise was expressed about the WAAF artisans. This was crucial technical work undertaken to ensure that South Africa's aeroplanes could stay in the skies. Artisanal work took place at several levels. The artisans themselves were employed as fitters, carpenters and electricians tasked with the repair and fabrication of various engine parts. At its zenith, there were 40 different WAAF musterings.[170] Many of the delicate instruments used in flying – such as compasses, airspeed indicators, altimeters, and bombsights – had to be manufactured in South Africa due to the wartime difficulty of limited shipping facilities. It was the artisans of the WAAF and SAAF who made them.[171]

Much like aircraft refuelling, artisan work had previously been exclusively a male job undertaken by SAAF members. It became increasingly common "to find women, their eyes protected in professional fashion, handling oxyacetylene flames. Their welding […] as good as that of any man".[172] An article in the *Nongqai* from March 1943 – by which time the training

[166] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star*, 28/8/1942.
[167] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star*, 28/8/1942.
[168] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star*, 28/8/1942.
[169] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star*, 28/8/1942.
[170] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 53.
[171] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 53.
[172] SANDFA, H.P.H Behrens, "The S.A. Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No 3, n.p.

and use of women as artisans was well established – noted that WAAF artisans looked "quite at home in the workshops" handing "heavy hammers, screwdrivers, or whatever they may be using" to the point where "nobody would say that this is the first generation of women in mankind's history that has done this work".[173] The skill of these women was further praised by a renowned officer commanding the flying school:

> They have proved eminently suited to the work […] and reports coming in from the flying schools to which they have since been drafted confirm my opinion that as flight mechanics women can be as good as men, and in some cases even better.[174]

This acknowledgement by a veteran described in *The Rand Daily Mail* as "a pilot of the famous Royal Flying Corps who was shot down by Goering in 1918", not only testifies to the instrumental role played by women in the war effort but further suggests that they were better able to function in this role than men. It could similarly be argued that his surprise at their efficiency is yet another indication of the prevailing patriarchal and paternalistic ways in which women's work in a male environment required male endorsement to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, by publishing this commendation on a public platform was an attempt to sway public opinion on the role of women in the military. It goes further to suggest that the work of WAAF artisans and mechanics was evidently "a man's job that women are going to take over".[175]

In addition to those who did the repair work in the workshops and hangars were others who made this work possible. WAAFs were trained and deployed as draughtswomen who had the responsibility of creating technical drawings of aeroplane component parts from which the artisans manufactured the necessary components.[176] To ensure that the work of the artisans was up to standard, WAAF viewers inspected all types of work "and rejected anything that was not exactly correct in the minutest detail".[177]

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[173] SANDFA, H.P.H Behrens, "The S.A. Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No 3, n.p.
[174] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "SA Girls to be trained as flight mechanics" *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/6/1942.
[175] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "SA Girls to be trained as flight mechanics" *Rand Daily Mail*, 10/6/1942.
[176] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 53.
[177] Jameson and Ashburner, p. 53.

Finally, the technical recorders had to keep track of the condition of every aircraft and engine in use, alerting the artisans to which were most in need of their attention.[178] Here again, the women demonstrated their value and ability. According to Jameson and Ashburner, SAAF artisans actually preferred to use WAAFs (over male staff) as technical recorders as it was "important to have somebody reliable and conscientious, and the Waafs were that".[179]

A further area where the WAAF was integrated into male dominated jobs was as wireless operators. At 64 Air School, male and female Wireless operators were trained together to decipher and relay important information to pilots about poor weather conditions or enemy positions using a variety of signals; including Morse code, Aldis lamps[180] and the International Code of Signals.[181] Wireless operators were also expected to have a basic understanding of navigation if the pilot had to be guided to safety. Wireless operators would have to precisely relay information from the ground station crews to the pilot to safely steer the aircraft home.[182] These operators had to be able to accurately send and receive massages at 20 words per minute "in spite of severe atmospheric and other interference".[183]

This was complex and important work. After training at 64 Air School, the wireless operators – both men and women – would serve under the same conditions.[184] Each WAAF controlled a circuit that included several stations. Their days were divided into four, six-hour shifts, with two 36-hour off duty shifts per week. As wireless operators, WAAFs shared their work with "qualified men, with exactly the same chances of promotion".[185] The close working relationship between the SAAF and WAAF was a common occurrence in the Air Force.

Parachute packing was one previously male area where WAAF women in fact outnumbered men. Described as "perhaps one of the most delicate units in the outfit of the modern aviator",[186] parachutes were a crucial component that helped to ensure the airmen's safety. Due to their importance to airmen, parachutes had to be regularly tested, inspected and

[178] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force"in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, p. 320.
[179] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 51.
[180] A lamp used to visually signal code – often Morse code – by opening and closing shutters mounted on the front of the lamp.
[181] An internationally recognised system of communication between vessels as well as aircraft – first codified in 1855 and rising to widespread military use during World War I – using a series of coloured flags to relay standardised massages in seven languages.
[182] SANDFA, J. Sack: "The Union's "Radio City"' in *Nongqai*, February 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, pp. 187-188.
[183] SANDFA, J. Sack: "The Union's "Radio City"' in *Nongqai*, February 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, p. 187
[184] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star* 28/8/1942.
[185] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star* 28/8/1942.
[186] SANDFA, "Parachute Packing: A job that requires Infinite Patience" in *Nongqai*, April 1942, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, p. 453.

maintained – at least every 30 days. While most of the inspectors were men, it was the careful job of the Waafs to correctly pack and repack these parachutes into the pack cover. This was a skilled and delicate job: "there are many ways of squeezing a parachute into a pack cover but only one right way of doing it".[187] Parachutes for pilots had to be packed differently to those for observers due to the different needs of these airmen.[188] In addition, the women also had to know the difference between packing parachutes for airmen and parachutes for supply droppers.[189] Packers were expected to be able to correctly pack six or seven parachutes a day, and more in an emergency.[190]

Packing parachutes was not the only task at hand; and it is within this aspect that a clear difference between the men and women involved in this work arises. As the maintenance of parachutes was crucial to their efficacy, women were tasked with repairing the fabric of the parachute.[191] A standard parachute for the SAAF had a diameter of 24 feet and was made up of 70 square yards of high-grade silk.[192] The men, on the other hand, did the "heavier work" of repairing the harnesses and webbing.[193]

Due to the close association between the male and female branches of the SAAF, airwomen were afforded many opportunities to take on types of work that had not been available to them before the war or outside the context of the WADC. Throughout many of the jobs that the women of the WAAF were integrated into, they worked side-by-side with their male counterparts in the SAAF, demonstrating the close association between the male and female branches of this arm of service in practice. What also becomes evident when looking at the Waafs undertaking previously male jobs within the SAAF, is that their male superiors often expressed surprise at the ability of these women. This is confirmed in Airwoman Ethel Price's recollections. She recounts that:

> The men found it very difficult to accept us, and it was

[187] SANDFA, "Parachute Packing: A job that requires Infinite Patience" in *Nongqai*, April 1942, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, p. 455.
[188] SANDFA, "Parachute Packing: A job that requires Infinite Patience" in *Nongqai*, April 1942, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, p. 455.
[189] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star* 28/8/1942. These were metal canisters containing food, water and medical supplies which could be dropped from planes.
[190] SANDFA, "Parachute Packing: A job that requires Infinite Patience" in *Nongqai*, April 1942, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, p. 455.
[191] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star* 28/8/1942.
[192] SANDFA, "Parachute Packing: A job that requires Infinite Patience" in *Nongqai*, April 1942, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, p. 454.
[193] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Women's Part in Keeping Planes in the Air – Growing Sphere of Activities in the WAAF", *The Star* 28/8/1942.

> particularly bad with us girls who were artisans. They sneered at us. But the chaps who worked with us eventually respected us. Anyway, we were expected to work like men.[194]

Price adds that the greatest difficulty that she experienced in terms of her work and abilities being accepted came from outside the SAAF. Those who came "from other branches of the military or when [men] came back from Up North", she remarks, "hadn't ever done anything serious".[195] For these men who had little to no contact with women doing "masculine" work seeing "a woman working on an engine […] really shook them".[196]

This was an experience shared by British WAAFs. Spencer recounts that men in Britain expressed similar feelings towards women undertaking the work of artisans and mechanics, further stating that there were "some recollections of men's antipathy to women mechanics but, on the whole, this was quickly overcome".[197] Stone offers an explanation for this male wonderment, stating that:

> […] the military context was theoretically conducive to a radical rethinking of the position of women in the labour force […] the exigencies of the manpower situation prompted a radical subversion of traditional gender roles and the assumptions on which they were founded. [198]

This meant that within the WAAF in Britain long-held beliefs about women's abilities and their apparently innate characteristics were subverted when the women proved their capabilities in these male jobs. Sadly, they had to prove their worth because of the prevailing gender stereotypes which furthermore, never really questioned male inefficiency nor idleness of men waiting to enter into combat in war zones.

Nor was this unique to women's auxiliaries in the military environ. For civilian women who joined the labour force as munitions workers in South Africa during the War, historian

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[194] Crwys-Williams, *A Country at War 1939-1945: Mood of a Nation*, p. 226.
[195] Crwys-Williams, p. 226.
[196] Crwys-Williams, p. 226.
[197] Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", p. 143.
[198] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", 1999, p. 607.

Nancy Clark points out, also met with similar resistance but nevertheless "proved capable of performing the work in question as efficiently as male labour".[199]

As in Britain, the circumstances of the War made it "imperative that women entered various domains and undertook various tasks that had previously been considered 'male'", in the words of Stone.[200] This, she says, opened gendered definitions of work and behaviour for questioning.[201] Through their undertaking of ground crew work, these Waafs were able to – briefly – transgress traditional gender divisions of labour. Despite this, as they were ground crew, they remained within the realm of auxiliary. So did the men they worked alongside as neither were pilots, using Stone's spectrum of auxiliary in the airforce.[202]

### 4.6.3 Instructors

Through the WAAF, women were not only able to do men's work but they also taught men how to do men's work. A not insignificant corpus of WAAF became instructors. As with those who gained this position in the WAAS, these were women who had undergone specialised training and had shown aptitude as mentors. As such, they were selected to train others. Unlike the WAAS – where instructors were simply used to train other WAAS members – instructors in the WAAF also took on the responsibility of training men. Waafs who were qualified as pilots and who had the necessary flight experience – particularly those who had gained their "A" pilot's license during their pre-war membership of the SAWAA – trained male pilots.[203]

In this capacity, one of the key tools used by female instructors were Link Trainers (shown in Figure 4.1).[204] This was a common apparatus used for training pupil-pilots to help them become instrument conscious. This took the form of a scaled down aeroplane with a full-scale cockpit that contained an exact replica of the instrument panel that the pupil-pilot would encounter in the real aircraft. Additionally,

Figure 4.1: A Waaf training a pupil-pilot in a Link Trainer

[199] Nancy L. Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa", *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001), p. 1192.
[200] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 605.
[201] Stone, p. 605.
[202] Stone, p. 610.
[203] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 50.
[204] SANDFA, Image taken from *Nongqai*, July 1943, Vol XXXIV, No. 7, p. 643.

the Link Trainer was mounted on a revolving base that allowed the pupil to safely experience flight conditions. The instructor fed the pupil-pilot instructions through earphones which then had to be carried out accurately. The instructor also monitored the pupil's progress. Although the (male) pupil was in control of the machine, the (female) instructor was responsible for the pupil.[205] In this instance the strictly guarded position of women's military service as secondary was (briefly) inverted, with the WAAF as instructor taking on a position of superiority over her SAAF pupil.

This was mirrored by Russian women pilots in the Red Army. Here qualified women were also used to train unqualified airmen, although they did so without the use of the Link Trainer.[206] It should be noted that, in the Russian context, women's participation in the military was defined as equal to men's due to Soviet ideology.[207] This meant that in the military context, there was no gendered inversion. Ideologically, this was simply an instructor training a novice. However, the proclamation of equality did not always translate to practice.[208] This means that the same *social* inversion of gender norms was present here.

As instructors – in much the same vein as their sisters who took on other previously wholly-male occupations in the Air Force – surprise at the instructors' capabilities were mangled with the praise they received. For example an article in the *Nongqai* claims that the "women have proved as able Instructors as men".[209] There was, however, one unique instance where that was further testament to the ability of WAAF women to take on the training of airmen in a wholly masculine field.

Before the outbreak of the war, Lieutenant (Miss) Denny Morrison had completed her MSc at Stellenbosch University before going on to do chemical research at Imperial College, London, and joining the Fuel Research Board in Pretoria. At the outbreak of the war, she joined the WVAF and, with permission from the Fuel Research Board soon joined the WAAF full-time on the *proviso* that she took on a technical job. In light of this requirement from her

[205] SANDFA, H.P.H Behrens, "The S.A. Women's Auxiliary Air Force"in *Nongqai*, March 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No 3, n.p.
[206] See: Lubya Vinogradova, *Defending the Motherland: The Soviet Women Who Fought Hitlers Aces* (United Kingdom: Maclehose Press, 2015).
[207] Nataliia Zalietok, "British and Soviet Women in the Military Campaign of 1939-45: A Comparative Review", *MCU Journal*, no. Gender (2018), p. 14.
[208] Olesya Khromeychuk, "Experiences of Women at War", *Baltic Worlds* X, no. 4 (2017), p. 60.
[209] SANDFA, H.P.H Behrens, "The S.A. Women's Auxiliary Air Force"in *Nongqai*, March 1943, Vol. XXXIV, No 3, n.p.

employers, Morrison chose to join a course in armament instruction and, as a "try-out", she was afforded the opportunity to become the first (and only) women in this course.[210]

In December 1940, Morrison joined a squadron armaments course as the only woman in a class of 22 men. Many of her male classmates were sceptical at the inclusion of a woman into what they saw as "very much a man's job".[211] But she soon proved herself by gaining the second highest marks in the course. After her success in this first course, Morrison went on to do every subject connected with Air Force armament (except for flying), even surpassing her previous achievement by obtaining the top marks in an armaments specialist course.[212]

Due to her success during her training in armaments and her academic qualifications, Morrison soon became an armament instructor. According to an article in *The Star* about her achievements, Morrison was "the first woman in the British Empire, if not in the world, to become an armament instructor".[213] In this capacity, she lectured on armament science and mathematics (her two main subjects) to SAAF airmen who hoped to qualify as armament specialists, instructors and squadron armament officers. She was also praised by the men she taught for her strong understanding of "intricacies of pyrotechnics, bomb fusing, theory of aerial sighting and machine guns".[214] In short, Morrison defied convention and successfully proved the cynics wrong about her ability – as a woman – to take on a wholly masculine job. It is also worth noting that in both this exposé in *The Rand Daily Mail* and the article which appeared in the *Nongquai*, both served to justify the place of women in these positions and attempted to not only serve as a source of inspiration for other servicewomen but also to alleviate the suspicions of their sceptics.

As instructors, Waafs took on yet another previously masculine role. Not only did they prove themselves more than competent as artisans and mechanics – demonstrating their practical skills – but also their theoretical knowledge of important parts of Air Force service. Particularly for those who trained SAAF men – as pilot instructors and the extraordinary case of Morrison – this work added another level to the WAAF's military service. Although it did

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[210] SANDFA, UWH, South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Woman who teaches men who to handle bombs: Remarkable job of South African Girl Graduate", *The Star*, n.d.
[211] SANDFA, UWH, South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Woman who teaches men who to handle bombs: Remarkable job of South African Girl Graduate", *The Star*, n.d.
[212] SANDFA, UWH, South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Woman who teaches men who to handle bombs: Remarkable job of South African Girl Graduate", *The Star*, n.d.
[213] SANDFA, UWH, South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Woman who teaches men who to handle bombs: Remarkable job of South African Girl Graduate", *The Star*, n.d.
[214] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Woman who teaches men who to handle bombs: Remarkable job of South African Girl Graduate", *The Star*, n.d.

not serve to elevate them beyond the auxiliary stage of their military integration, as put forward by Campbell,[215] serving as instructors did – briefly – elevate the Waafs above their trainees. During the period of instruction, the carefully constructed checks and balances put in place by the UDF to ensure that military women could not hold power over military men were subverted; the (female) instructor was placed in a position of authority over her (male) students. This was further challenged when women were seconded to anti-aircraft batteries.

### 4.6.4 "South Africa's First Front Line Women Soldiers": Waafs serving in Anti-Aircraft Batteries

In 1942, with fears of a Japanese submarine attack on the South African coastline mounting, the WAAF was drawn into a new operating capacity. More manpower was needed to operate searchlight and anti-aircraft batteries at strategic points along the coast; and the WAAF with their goal of aiding the Air Force "wherever possible" was used to help fill this need.

Several months after the first members of the WAAS had begun their training as Coastal Artillery Specialists, the first Waafs were trained to join South Africa's coastal anti-aircraft batteries in April 1942. In order to serve with coastal searchlight crews and the anti-aircraft gunners, these volunteers had to first be taught every aspect of the work,[216] like their sisters in the AS-WAAS.[217] This training entailed: learning how to operate the giant searchlights skilfully to be able to detect enemy aircraft, and how to use a variety of instruments that would supply important information to the anti-aircraft gunners during action. This included the sound locator – a device which judged the position of the target relative to the searchlight beam. When the training began the women were first trained by daylight but were blindfolded when training with the sound locator or other instruments.[218]

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[215] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union" *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1993), p. 318.
[216] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences", *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[217] SANDFA, WADC, Box 12, DR(W)F 36 Training of WAAS Coast Artillery Specialists, Women's Artillery Specialists Course, 21/7/1941.
[218] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences", *The Star*, 23/4/1942.

As the need to provide Air Force AA batteries with "complete crews" of WAAF grew,[219] other skilled jobs were added to this endeavour.[220] Waafs who served in AA batteries soon became "first rate operators of the delicate instruments of modern war".[221] They worked using sound locators (which judge the position of a target relative to searchlight beam); as part of searchlight crews; manned the delicate instruments used with AA guns such as the predictors used to calculate the position of an enemy aircraft, or height finders which determine the timing of shell fuses; and as spotters who decided if an approaching aircraft was friend or foe.[222] These women became the "eyes, ears and brains of the anti-aircraft batteries" undertaking work described as being "of the greatest importance in our defence programme".[223]

The Waafs who helped to man South Africa's coastal guns led strenuous lives in the open-air living in bungalows on coast next to those of their SAAF colleagues. They had to be continually on alert to guard against enemy aircraft as they worked in active service conditions.[224] Like their sisters who served in the AS-WAAS, these women were involved in "duties other than non-combatant duties",[225] and took the Combat Oath. The Waafs who joined the AA batteries were described by the media as "South Africa's First front line women soldiers".[226] Despite living in barracks as soldiers and "[doing] the work of soldiers",[227] as was carefully pointed out in an article outlining the work of the WAAF in AA batteries along the coast, "the girls behind the guns [did] not become part of the actual gun crews – that is load and fire the guns".[228]

In spite of this restriction, the Waafs were part of combatant units. They may not have been allowed to shoot, but they were "in the trenches" next to their male comrades-in-arms. As

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[219] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences" *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[220] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force"in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3. p. 320
[221] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences" *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[222] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences" *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[223] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences" *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[224] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force"in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3. p. 320.
[225] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 3/9/1942.
[226] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences" *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[227] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences" *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[228] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences" *The Star*, 23/4/1942.

with the AS-WAAS, Waafs who joined AA batteries came the closest to transgressing the combat taboo through their active involvement in a front-line unit under active service conditions. However – despite having the potential as true soldiers – the Waafs were barred from taking the final step to becoming full combatants – they were not authorised to shoot. Much like the women of the AS-WAAS, they could not be allowed to take part in the lethal aspect of combat without negating gender norms of feminine behaviour: they could become protectors but not life-takers.

### 4.6.5 An Exception to the Rule: The Status of WAAF Pilots

The inclusion of Waafs in Anti-Aircraft Batteries, and their status as "South Africa's First front line women soldiers",[229] came close to subverting the combat taboo. However, in the context of the Air Force there was a further division in status to overcome. Members of the SAAF (both male and female) were not only divided between combatant and non-combatant, but also between Air and Ground Crew: between those who flew and those who did not.[230] This division was not purely gendered (like the division between combatant and non-combatant) but was rooted in aspects of the divisional military culture of the SAAF related to its mission: protecting the skies. This does not mean that ground crew were not members of SAAF, but that aircrew had higher hierarchical status because of their proximity to flight. This means that the small number of Waafs who served as pilots during World War II moved beyond the auxiliary.

As outlined above, many Waafs with "A" pilot's licences became Link Trainer instructors, teaching (male) pupil pilots to become instrument conscious. However, this work did not involve actual flight, just the simulation of flight. Only a small handful of jobs within the WAAF actually involved going up in the air. Amongst these were within meteorological observation and the photographic section. Both of these jobs were limited to other ranks, rather than officers.[231] It is ironic that few Waafs piloted aircraft given their origin in the agitation of the SAWAA for more accessible flight training for female pilots.

It would appear that only two WAAF women distinguished themselves as pilots, according to a 1944 article in the *Nongqai* outlining the development and scope of the

[229] SANDFA, UWH, Civil Section, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, Newspaper Cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences", *The Star*, 23/4/1942.
[230] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 610.
[231] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, pp. 50-51.

WAAF.[232] These were Captain (Mrs) Rosamund Everard-Steenkamp and Captain (Miss) Rhenia Slabbert.

According to Scott Shaw, like Dunning and Egerton-Bird, Everard-Steenkamp discovered the joys of aviation long before the creation of the SAWAA or the WAAF. She started flying in 1935, and 1939 had earned her A and B pilot's licences, navigator's licences and instructor's licences.[233] She had also completed a solo tour of Europe and North Africa.[234] At the outbreak of war, Everard-Steenkamp became an instructor at the Witwatersrand Technical College. She "trained many pupil pilots who later distinguished themselves in the South African Air Force".[235] With the creation of the WAAF, she was enlisted at the rank of captain and became an instructor to 61 Squadron.[236] By 1942, Everard-Steenkamp (alongside Rhenia Slabbert) were employed to shuttle Lockheed Lodestars (a passenger transport aircraft) between South Africa and Cairo.[237] Sadly, at the end of this year her husband Captain H.N.F. Steenkamp of the SAAF (whom she had taught how to fly) passed away. This bereavement spurred on Everard-Steenkamp's drive to "achieve a more effective role for women pilots in the war".[238] After an unsuccessful attempt at joining the Russian Air Force, she joined the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) in 1944 ferrying many different types of aircraft from production lines to operational bases.[239] Towards the end of the war Everard-Steenkamp became one of (if not the) first women to pilot a jet at the request of Wing Commander H. Bird-Wilson of the RAF to show that "even a woman could do it".[240] When the war was over, she flew one last sortie delivering a Spitfire. She lost control of the aircraft and crashed. She was killed instantly. Today Everard-Steenkamp is perhaps better remembered as a landscape artist.

Less is remembered about Everard-Steenkamp's fellow female pilot who shuttled Lodestars between South Africa and Cairo, Rhenia Slabbert. She was also an early aviatrix. Her interest in flight was sparked on a childhood flight from London to Paris. Slabbert became a member of the Rand Flying Club and obtained her A licence in Durban in 1937. She was

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[232] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: Women's Auxiliary Air Force" in *Nongqai*, March 1944, Vol. XXXV, No. 3. p. 320.
[233] "Aviatrix Profiles," *Southern Women in Aviation and Aerospace*, 2012. p. 9.
[234] C. Scott Shaw, "Was Captain Rosamund Everard-Steenkamp the First Woman in the World to Fly a Jet? ," *Military History Journal* 3, no. 5 (1976), http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol035ss.html (10/9/2020)
[235] Shaw.
[236] Shaw.
[237] Shaw.
[238] Shaw.
[239] "Aviatrix Profiles." p. 10.
[240] Shaw, "Was Captain Rosamund Everard-Steenkamp the First Woman in the World to Fly a Jet? "

reportedly the first woman in that city to do so. Like Everard-Steenkamp, Slabbert was part of the Communication Squadron of the WAAF.[241] She passed away in 1983.

While opportunities for flight in the South African WAAF were limited, they did exist. The limitation of flight was even more severe within the British WAAF as there were no piloting jobs in any of the 50 trades open to British WAAFs.[242] Those who hoped to fly had to join the ATA instead.

The ATA was a civilian organisation founded at the outbreak of the War in 1939 as a way for civilian pilots, who were ineligible for service in the RAF due to age or ill-health, to alleviate manpower pressure on the RAF.[243] Unlike the RAF, the ATA did not form a separate women's section, nor was there a gendered division between flying and non-flying personnel. According to Julie Fountain, women made up between 11 and 16 % of ATA pilots.[244] As there was no separation between the men and women who served in the ATA, these women pilots gained a fair amount of equality. These men and women flew the same aircraft, under the same contracts within the same organisation. In 1943, women in the ATA were also granted equal pay.[245] Women also fulfilled a number of other jobs in the ATA as engineers, nurses, administrative personnel and drivers.[246] Due to the opportunity of piloting a range of aircraft, most famously Spitfires, many WAAFs – from both Britain and South Africa – left the Air Force to join the ATA.

A possible explanation for the exclusion of British Waafs from flight can be traced to the ethos that surrounded aerial combat. According to Bourke, fighter pilots engage in a rare but highly respected form of combat.[247] Fighter pilots combine the intimacy of bayonet attacks – where equals honour their opponents' skills as warriors – and the technical skill of the sniper.[248] In the skies, war is fought as it ought to be: "an individual contest between two men".[249] For this, fighter pilots gain prestige, promotions and decorations.[250]

These men and their exploits in aerial combat are romanticised in a number of ways and placed above other forms of aerial warfare – such as aerial bombing – which are seen as

[241] "Aviatrix Profiles", p. 9.
[242] Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", pp. 141-142.
[243] Fountain, "'The Most Interesting Work a Woman Can Perform in Wartime': The Exceptional Status of British Women Pilots during the Second World War", p. 215.
[244] Fountain, p. 213.
[245] Fountain, p. 215
[246] Fountain, p. 213.
[247] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 52.
[248] Bourke, p. 46-50.
[249] Bourke, p. 48.
[250] Bourke, p. 56.

lacking skill.[251] This shows that there is a further hierarchical status divide within the Air Force: not only between air crew and ground crew, but between the skills associated with different types of flying. Furthermore, military service (in any branch of the military) is held by men as a validation of manhood. In the words of Campbell: "if women could do it, then it was not very manly".[252]

Russian women were the only women during World War II to serve as fighter pilots.[253] There were three regiments of Russian women pilots involved in combat: a fighter regiment, a day bombing regiment and a night bombing regiment. The most (in)famous were the "Night Witches": the 46th Guards Women's Night Bomber Aviation Regiment.[254] The Soviet ideology of equality outweighed gendered dichotomies of military service, meaning that the strict divisions between male combatant and female non-combatant did not factor into women's military service in the USSR.[255]

The women of the WAAF in South Africa – carefully defined as non-combatants – could, of course, not be admitted to the heroic warrior status of male fighter pilots. The majority of Waafs fell into the conception that heroic women's wartime service must be performed not for personal gain but as a "public service […] for the greater good", as put forward by Summerfield. [256] They were expected to act in a support role, freeing men for combat (or flight). But for the flying few, their status as air crew elevated them beyond the auxiliary. This is particularly clear in the cases of Everard-Steenkamp and Slabbert who distinguished themselves above the rest.

## 4.7 Chapter Conclusion

The military identity of the WAAF as a part of the SAAF emerged from its origins as the SAWAA. From the outset, the SAWAA aimed to release men from civil aviation and assist the SAAF in case of war.[257] The main purview of the SAWAS, by contrast, was to fulfil a more

[251] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp. 63-64.
[252] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 321
[253] Zalietok, "British and Soviet Women in the Military Campaign of 1939-45: A Comparative Review", p. 21.
[254] Euridice Charon Cardona and Roger D. Markwick, "'Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45", *Russian Review* 68, no. 2 (2009), p. 240.
[255] Roger R. Reese, "Soviet Women at War," *Military History*, 2011, p. 46 & Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 319.
[256] Penny Summerfield cited in Spencer, "No 'Fear of Flying'? Worrals of the WAAF, Fiction, and Girls' Informal Wartime Education", p. 141.
[257] Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, p. 2.

caring role: providing moral support for the soldiers. The differences between these two branches of the WADC can also be seen in the use of the SAWAA and SAWAS in relation to the WAAF and WAAS. The SAWAS remained a civilian organisation focused on ministering to the needs of servicemen. Its function for the WAAS was only recruiting. The SAWAA, by contrast, was recreated as the WVAF who were administrated as a branch of the WAAF and served as their own auxiliary service. While the pattern of the WAAF's creation mirrors that of the WAAS, the not insignificant differences show that the military identity of the WAAF was rooted in its relationship to the SAAF.

As a part of the WADC, the WAAF was formed to help ease manpower needs for the SAAF. Due to the fast, initial growth of this women's service, high hopes were established that Waafs would be used to replace airmen "wherever possible" on a large-scale.[258] While this was never fully achieved, due to both the greater impact of the recruitment crisis and practical concerns of accommodation and pay rates that prevented many women from joining the service, the integration of women into the Air Force led to the male and female wings of this arm of service creating a close association. This meant that airmen and airwomen did not serve in completely distinct units but formed a single service. The WAAF and SAAF shared a military identity.

The amalgamation of the WAAF and SAAF not only allowed a closer working relationship between airmen and airwomen, it also meant that Waafs were trained and deployed in a number of jobs within the Air Force that had previously only been held by men. Through their success at training and during deployment, the WAAF was able to demonstrate that women were as capable as their male counterparts as mechanics, artisans and wireless operators. It was in this respect where the majority of the impact of the WAAF was felt. Although in terms of numbers, as in the WAAS, clerical staff made up the majority, the women who took on these non-flying jobs were able to overcome the surprise felt by their superiors and proved themselves capable.

The auxiliary status of the WAAF was challenged in two ways. Firstly, the female members of mixed AA Batteries subverted the combat taboo as part of combatant units despite the fact that they were not allowed to pull the trigger themselves and take the final step to becoming fully combatant, like the members of the AS-WAAS. Secondly, and uniquely to the

[258] NASAP, VWN, 969, SW342/4 Military services: Living accommodation for WAAF. Kimberley etcetera, Untitled memo dated 11/6/1941.

WAAF, a small contingent were able to become "those who flew".[259] As pilots the Waafs moved beyond the Air Force's distinct conceptualisation of auxiliary as it related to flight and as members of combatant units they moved beyond their social framing as the protected.

[259] Stone, "Creating a (Gendered? ) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", p. 610.

# Chapter 5: More than Pretty Girls and Anchors: The Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943-1945

The final branch of the WADC to come into being was the Women's Auxiliary Naval Service (WANS). Known as the Swans, only 316 women served in the WANS. Not only was it the smallest of South Africa's women's auxiliary services, but it was also the shortest lived as it was only officially formed in 1943. This is not to suggest that the Swans were insignificant. Quite the contrary. The history of the WANS contains the only instance of a member of the WADC being given (and executing) the order to "fire in anger" on the enemy.[1]

In comparison to women's auxiliary services attached to the armies and air forces of other allied nations during World War II, the international literature on women's participation in naval auxiliary services during World War II is sparse.[2] One of the few places where the histories of auxiliary seawomen have emerged is in the form of commemorative histories and memoirs.[3] This is particularly obvious in the case of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS or Wrens). Unlike the ATS and British WAAF, the WRNS was not disbanded after the end of World War II but continued to serve alongside the Royal Navy (RN) until 1993, when the WRNS was integrated into the RN. This is reflected in an array of published works. These include *The WRNS: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service* by M.H. Fletcher, a former director of the WRNS, and *The Wrens 1917-1977: A history of the Women's Royal Naval Service* by Ursula Stuart Mason published in commemorations of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the service.[4]

As with the other services that made up the WADC, there has been little academic focus on this women's service. In comparison to its sister services of the WADC the WANS are overlooked because their impact has been erroneously assessed in terms of their small numbers and short existence in contrast to that of the WAAS and WAAF. In terms of David Katz's

[1] Margaret P. H. Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), p. 97.
[2] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Uniform : The World War II Experiment", *Military Affairs* 51, no. 3 (1987), p. 137.
[3] Campbell, p. 137.
[4] Ursula Stuart Mason, *The Wrens 1917-77: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service* (England: Educational Explorers Ltd., 1977) & M. H. Fletcher, *The WRNS: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service* (London: B.T. Batsford Limited, 1989).

progression of World War II historiography, the history of the Swans has not moved much further than "Drum and Trumpet" contemporary war reporting.[5]

*Sailor-women, Sea-women, Swans* by Margaret P.H. Laver is the only text about the WANS that moves beyond this historiographical limitation.[6] Laver, a former Swan, divides the book into two sections: "History" and "Reminiscences". In the former, she draws heavily on a number of primary sources[7] to tell the story of the formation, training, work and daily routines of the Swans. The second part of the text includes the personal recollections of more than 40 Swans, collected in 1976. Because of its hybrid nature as part official history/part memoir, *Sailor-women, Sea-women, Swans* is understandably nostalgic.[8] As a former Swan writing a history of the service for the Swans History Publication Fund – a fund set up to finance the publication of this book – Laver's text can be read as an authorised "herstory" of the WANS. Reception has been mixed. Katz suggests that it is informative, descriptive rather than analytical, seeking not to produce "ground-breaking work" but to serve the personal interests of the women who served.[9] A text of such a nature can surely be read as ground-breaking for the 1970s and Laver has made a substantial contribution to the war effort by bringing the voices of former Swans into the public domain.

The micro "herstories" contained in the reminiscences provide an insight into the thoughts and feelings of these servicewomen, avoiding the "universalization" of military histories.[10] In reading these recollections as a type of oral history by proxy, they take the form of "*les sources du moi*" as put forward by Thébaud.[11] The recollections, therefore, provide important glimpses into how the military service of these women was shaped by the social, cultural and interpersonal forces of the time, beyond the confines of a military archive.[12]

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[5] David Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 40, no. 3 (2013), pp. 280–317, p. 286.
[6] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*. Laver also provides detailed list of all the Swans ratings with the dates of their attestation and demobilisation. In this list, she includes the ranks of each individual Swan upon demobilisation. These ranks are used throughout this chapter, unless stated otherwise.
[7] These include newspapers, government publications and some archival material, much of which is copied directly.
[8] Katz, "A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa's Participation in the Second World War", p. 286.
[9] Katz, p. 286.
[10] Weronika Grzebalska, "Between Gender Blindness and Nationalist Herstory", *Baltic Worlds* X, no. 4 (2017), p. 80.
[11] Françoise Thébaud, "Understanding Twentieth-Century Wars through Women and Gender Forty Years of Historiography", *Clio*, no. 39 (2014), p. 163.
[12] Louise W. Knight, "Sibling Rivalry: History and Memoir", *The Women's Review of Books* 24, no. 4 (2007), p. 13 & Julie Stephens, "Our Remembered Selves : Oral History and Feminist Memory", *Oral History* 38, no. 1 (2010), p. 82.

The WANS was a unique branch of the WADC because of the emphasis on positioning them as members of the Technical Branch in defence-related posts. Drawing on Campbell's contention that the use of women as auxiliaries is a stage in their integration into the armed forces,[13] this chapter argues that the Swans, because of their divisional identity, were able to move well-beyond the auxiliary level despite their brief military existence. One section, the Controlled Mining Watchkeeper Swans at Saldaha Bay, took part in an "organized lethal attack on an organized enemy",[14] and as such, they should be considered the first women's auxiliary team to have crossed the Rubicon, going from auxiliary to combatant.

This will be done by first outlining the difficulties surrounding the creation of WANS. Following this the organisational structure of the WANS is examined in order to uncover how this service was similar to or different from the WAAS and WAAF. This will also shed light on the distinct military identity of the Swans as part of the military (sub-)culture of the SANF. The training that the Swans received will be examined showing not only how these women were prepared for deployment but also how the Navy's unique ways of doing and being were imparted on them. The deployment of the Swans will also be discussed to show how the jobs undertaken by the Swans took on two different levels of auxiliary service, as clericals and technicals. Finally, the circumstances which led to one group of Swans moving beyond the auxiliary stage will be investigated.

## 5.1 The Anticipated Hatching of Eggs: The Creation of the Women's Auxiliary Naval Service in 1943

The unique status of the WANS compared to its sister branches is rooted in the way that this service was founded. Unlike the WAAS and WAAF, the Swans had no civilian originator. Instead, it was created due to the South African Naval Forces' (SANF) recognition of the advantages of using women auxiliaries. It is worth noting that many of the laudatory comments made by the men of the military, published in the military magazine *Nongqai* and even media releases which appeared in *The Rand Daily Mail*, would have played a role in convincing the SANF that women could be more than "auxiliary" in the original sense of the

[13] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1993), p. 318.
[14] Campbell, p. 301.

term at the outbreak of war. However, the particularity of the SANF itself, also needs to be taken into consideration.

Although a South African Naval Service (SANS) had been established in 1922, by the outbreak of World War II this "amounted to little more than a nominal naval organisation, with only two officers and three ratings and, obviously, no warships".[15] Instead, the protection of South Africa's waters relied almost "entirely on the British Navy as its guardian in grey";[16] or more specifically, on the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve - South African Division (RNVR-SA). On 15 January 1940, South Africa's nascent naval service was re-mustered as the Seaward Defence Force (SDF) following a government decision to create a naval arm of the UDF.[17] The duty of this new naval body was to take charge of minesweeping and anti-submarine operations in South African coastal waters.[18]

Commonly dubbed the "Seaweed Defence Force",[19] the SDF was a small service consisting at its inception in January 1940 of 72 officers and 358 ratings.[20] Although the WAAS and WAAF were founded in June of 1940, there was no suggestion of creating an equivalent women's auxiliary branch for this naval body, perhaps due to its comparatively small size, and the fact that naval hostility in the waters of the Union was unlikely. This did not mean that the *Springdoes* were absent from South Africa's nascent naval service during the first half of the War. On 3 September 1940, an urgent request for replacements was sent to the office of the Deputy Adjutant General of the WAAS asking for WAAS clericals to replace male staff at several establishments. Amongst these was "One Writer required by the Director of Seaward Defence, Cape Town".[21] By January of 1941, the number of posts in the SDF that had been approved for replacement by Waasies had grown to seven.[22] As the War continued, ever more WAAS clericals "capable of using a typewriter"[23] were seconded to the SDF.

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[15] André Wessels, "The South African Navy and Its Predecessors, 1910-2010", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 38, no. 2 (2010), p. 111.
[16] Bill Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012), p. 48.
[17] Nasson, p. 113; Ian Van der Waag, *A Military History of South Africa* (South Africa: Jonathan Ball, 2015), p. 188.
[18] Wessels, "The South African Navy and Its Predecessors, 1910-2010", p. 111.
[19] Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*, p. 113.
[20] Van der Waag, *A Military History of South Africa*, p. 188. The term "rating" is used in naval parlance to refer to those who are not officers. In the army and Air Force the term "detail" is used.
[21] SANDFA, WADC, Box 51, AS 22-12 WAAS employed at Cape Command "Seaward Defence", Replacements, 3/9/1940.
[22] SANDFA, WADC, Box 51, AS 22-12 WAAS employed at Cape Command "Seaward Defence", Replacement by WAAS, 13/01/1941.
[23] SANDFA, WADC, Box 51, AS 22-12 WAAS employed at Cape Command "Seaward Defence", Untitled minute dated 20/01/1941.

### 5.1.1 "The proposal to establish a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force is not approved": The Battle of the Swans, 1941-1943

With the growing threat of submarine attacks on the South African Coast due to Japan's entry into the war in December 1941, the SDF and the RNVR(SA) were amalgamated on 1 August 1942 in order to "safeguard the strategic Cape sea route as best they could".[24] This new naval body of the UDF was designated the South African Naval Force (SANF).

The very next day, 2 August 1942, a letter was sent by the Director of the South African Naval Forces (DSANF), Commander J. Dalgleish, requesting authority from the Deputy Chief of Staff at Defence Headquarters to establish a women's auxiliary naval service.[25] Dalgleish's quick call to establish a women's auxiliary service for the Navy is an indication that the usefulness of women auxiliaries to the UDF in terms of relieving manpower pressures had proven itself. It should also be noted that the new SANF was created in the midst of the UDF-wide recruitment crisis; all available men needed to be used efficiently. This is the first motivation that Dalgleish stresses in his proposal.

Dalgleish estimated that the new field of technical work – running "Loop indicator gear, Harbour asdics, Controlled minefields etc."[26] – could be undertaken by an estimated 100 women. In addition, he cites that "there [were] at least 130 existing posts available in the SANF, 20 of which [were] filled by members of the WAAS and the remainder by male personnel of the SANF who could, if replaced by women, be released for more active service".[27] This included joining naval vessels on minesweeping operations around the South African coast and in the Mediterranean.

Dalgleish also foreground other "advantages" of establishing a women's auxiliary naval service. He argued that the new women's service would "stimulate recruiting": "I am convinced that there would be an immediate response for entry into a Women's Naval Force,

[24] Wessels, "The South African Navy and Its Predecessors, 1910-2010", p. 112.
[25] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[26] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[27] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.

especially among women who have a sentimental preference for a Naval Service with its distinctive uniform, and who are reluctant to join the WAAS".[28]

Recruiting for both the UDF and WADC was "almost at a standstill" in 1942.[29] The distinctiveness and attractiveness of this new naval uniform was seen as a way to boost recruiting. It was thought that the uniforms would appeal to women's vanity making them more eager to join a women's service with an attractive uniform over the dull khaki worn by the WAAS and WAAF. While women were carving out a space for themselves in this hypermasculine environment, they still fell prey to chauvinistic reflections such as this. This is not to suggest that Dalgleish shared these sentiments. He knew what he needed to say to convince the high command.

The second advantage pointed out by Dalgleish, mercifully reflects on the technical skills needed in the SANF:

> the majority of personnel will be required to be trained for technical work, and it would therefore be uneconomical and unsound to allow personnel to be interchangeable with any other service. This principle applies equally to clerical posts where the nature of the work is peculiar to a naval force.[30]

Finally, Dalgleish reiterated the precedent set by the South African Air Force in using women auxiliaries, as well as the British women's auxiliary services for their Army, Air Force and Navy.

Despite calling on issues of practicality, manpower and precedent, the Deputy Chief of Staff's response to Dalgleish's proposal was short and simple: "The proposal to establish a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force is not approved".[31] No explanation was provided.

Undeterred by the resistance from Headquarters, Dalgleish (the "gentle persuader", in the words of former Swan Margaret P.H. Laver[32]), refused to surrender. He proposed to instead establish a "SANF section of the Women's Auxiliary Service", as this would "probably be

[28] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Organisation: SANF, Establishment of Women's Section, n.d.
[29] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Memorandum: Formation of a Women's ACF Unit. 4/12/1941.
[30] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[31] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Organisation: SANF, 26/08/1942.
[32] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 2.

more convenient and would not necessitate the formation of a new unit".[33] This, it seems, was more amenable to those at Headquarters. For the next few months – until February 1943 – correspondence was lobbied back and forth between the Quartermaster General, the Adjutant General, the Secretary for Defence and Col. Werdmuller (in his capacity as head of the WAAS) regarding how the proposed WAAS-NS would function. It was made clear that this would be a new section of the WAAS attached to the SANF.[34]

Throughout this correspondence a key issue was whether this new branch of the WAAS should have their own distinctive uniform or continue to wear their WAAS uniforms with the addition of the badges of the SANF. While arguments against the issuing of a distinct naval uniform for the proposed WAAS-NS were rooted in matters of economy due to the costs involved, the arguments for this were centred on the potential of a "distinctive and attractive uniform".[35] It was thought that for women, this would be an "added incentive" and would, therefore, boost recruiting.[36] The urgent need to boost recruiting was rooted in the recruitment crisis that the UDF was experiencing while these proposals were being drawn up.[37]

During the bureaucratic exchange between members of the South African high command on the potential creation of a naval women's auxiliary, rumours began to spread in the press between February and March 1943 that the unit had in fact been approved.[38] The press had apparently been misinformed; confusing an announcement that Waasies would be seconded to the SAAF (in addition to the Waafs) with the expansion of WAAS roles within the SANF.[39] According to historians H. J. Martin and Niel Orpen, this public announcement may have inadvertently slowed down the negotiations.[40]

Sir Pierre van Ryneveld (as Chief of General Staff) was reportedly irate at this "loss of control" – that a women's auxiliary naval service had apparently been created without his approval – and blocked any further attempts to create a women's branch of the SAAF without his approval.[41] Van Ryneveld's own misunderstanding and mishandling of the situation "made

[33] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Establishment of a Women's Section, n.d
[34] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS. Establishment of a Women's Section, n.d
[35] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 2.
[36] WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Distinctive Uniform: WAAS dets. att. SANF, 6/10/1942.
[37] The recruiting crisis and its effects on the WADC as a whole are discussed in Section 2.1.3.
[38] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 1.
[39] H.J Martin and Niel D. Orpen, *South Africa at War: Preparations And Operations On The Home Front* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1979), p. 285.
[40] Martin and Orpen, pp. 285-287.
[41] Martin and Orpen, p. 286.

himself look foolish in the eyes of his subordinates",[42] as his anger had been "out of all proportion to the very practical expedient of having women to do similar work for the SANF".[43]

Four months after this furore had subsided, Dalgleish again recommended to the Deputy Chief of Staff that a women's auxiliary naval service branch of the WADC be created. This time the outcome was vastly different. Within a week of Dalgleish's second proposal on 10 August 1943, Smuts approved the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, in "direct contradiction of all Sir Pierre van Ryneveld had had to say on the subject".[44]

While Smuts' intercession was no doubt a boon for the creation of the Swans, the sudden aboutface in the decision to create the WANS as a unique unit of the WADC was also rooted in simple practicality of numbers. The original plan to augment naval manpower with naval WAAS had fallen through as there were simply not enough Waasies with the correct qualifications to replace a sufficient number of men in the SANF.[45] The organisational structure of the proposed WAAS-NS would also have been overly complex. As a branch of the WAAS under WAAS regulations, a commanding officer of the WAAS-NS would have been responsible to the OC WAAS. As a distinct naval unit of the WADC, however, a commanding officer of the WANS would only be answerable to the DSANF.[46] This meant that the process of recruitment and organisation would be streamlined.

Once the decision to create the WANS as a distinct branch of the WADC had been finalised, the DSANF in Pretoria sent a (rather excited) telex to his colleagues in Cape Town announcing that he "[anticipated] the hatching of eggs within a week".[47] The "eggs" refers to the fact that although the unit's official title was WANS, its members were to be designated "Swans". This was, in part, to avoid calling the women "wan" (looking pale and sickly). Instead, the Swans were to conjure images of elegance, beauty, swiftness. The name echoed that of the auxiliaries of the RN: the Women's Royal Naval Service, who were dubbed Wrens.[48] On 20 August 1943, Lt/Gen Sir Pierre van Ryneveld officially announced that a new unit had been created.

[42] Martin and Orpen, *South Africa at War: Preparations And Operations On The Home Front*, p. 286.
[43] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 2.
[44] Martin and Orpen, *South Africa at War: Preparations And Operations On The Home Front*, p. 287.
[45] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 25.
[46] Laver, pp. 25-26.
[47] Laver, p. 2.
[48] Laver, p. viii.

### 5.1.2 Birds of a feather: The Wrens and the Swans

Both the WAAS and the WAAF grew out of civilian women's organisations (the SAWAS and SAWAA, respectively).[49] The WANS, however, had no such civilian base to call on. Instead – much as the WAAS and WAAF had done earlier when they became militarised – the WANS modelled itself on the template of British contemporaries: the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS or Wrens).[50]

With tensions in Europe mounting the WRNS was re-formed in November 1938.[51] As World War II progressed, their numbers and variety of work developed. Initially the majority of work undertaken by the Wrens was clerical. It was only from 1941 that new categories of work were introduced "which were far from being the sort of work generally associated with women".[52] These included technical jobs like radio and air mechanics and maintenance work. Wrens also began to serve overseas.[53] With this growth it was the opinion of the Director of the WRNS that "given training, women were perfectly capable of undertaking most shore duties in place of men".[54]

The roles performed by the Wrens – either in Britain or abroad – were limited to shore work. Although the Wrens themselves were immensely proud of "being in the Navy", their actual position within the military structure was precarious. Wrens were not treated in naval hospitals and the service was only brought under the Naval Discipline Code in 1977.[55] As pointed out by Peniston-Bird, the WRNS remained a *civilian* body.[56] The main reason for this, she states, is that the Wrens were not deployed at sea.[57] The administrative distinction between the ATS and British WAAF as military and the Wrens as civilians, she further argues, was of little significance to the women themselves. They did not regard their role as one of a civilian.[58] Like members of the ATS and British WAAF, the Wrens saw themselves as servicewomen.

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[49] SANDFA , UWH, Civil Section, Box 20, SAWAS Compiled by I.M Schonland, 1954 & Jameson and Ashburner, *The South African WAAF*, (Pietermartizburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1948), p. 5.
[50] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. vii.
[51] The WRNS had initially been founded in 1917, for the purpose of aiding manpower pressure during World War I, but was disbanded in 1919.
[52] Stuart Mason, *The Wrens 1917-77: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service*, p. 62.
[53] Stuart Mason, p. 62.
[54] Stuart Mason, p. 62.
[55] Fletcher, *The WRNS: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service*, p. 22.
[56] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Of Hockey Sticks and Sten Guns: British Auxiliaries and Their Weapons in the Second World War", *Women's History Magazine*, no. 76 (2014), p. 13.
[57] Peniston-Bird, "Of Hockey Sticks and Sten Guns: British Auxiliaries and Their Weapons in the Second World War", p. 13.
[58] Peniston-Bird, p. 13.

This sentiment was endorsed by the British Admiralty at the end of war when the WRNS was acknowledged as being "an integral *part* of the Royal Navy" (emphasis added).[59]

While the WANS command in South Africa borrowed from the experience of the WRNS during the early establishment of the service, there was a crucial difference between these two women's naval auxiliaries. Just like the WRNS, the WANS only took on shore work. However, unlike their British counterparts, the Swans were not merely civilians in uniform. Although the Swans remained classified as auxiliaries, they fell under the direct control of the Director of the SANF and formed part of the WADC which was, in turn, part of the UDF. As such these were *servicewomen*, not simply civilians in uniform. The WANS therefore fell under a regimented organisational structure under which they were expected to perform.

## 5.2 Organisational Structure and Organisational Identity

Director of the South African Naval Forces Commander J. Dalgleish had struggled to convince those at UDF headquarters in Pretoria of the necessity of a distinct naval arm of the WADC. After more than a year's struggle, Dalgleish's vision was realised when the regulations for the new Women's Auxiliary Naval Service were officially gazetted on 8 October 1943. [60] Here, the composition of the service was delineated.

The rank structure was outlined in naval terms and the service would include "officers, petty officers and leading seaman ratings".[61] When the WAAS and WAAF were gazetted in 1940, their rank structures were also defined in terms of the male branches they would serve – the Army and Air Force, respectively. The WANS, like their sister branches, were part of the larger umbrella of the WADC but also fell under the control of the director of the SANF. [62] This had far-reaching consequences.

On Monday 11 October 1943, the first cohort of 47 Swans held their first parade and inspection in Cape Town. [63] This first group of Swans were drawn from members of the WAAS

[59] Nataliia Zalietok, "British and Soviet Women in the Military Campaign of 1939-45: A Comparative Review", *MCU Journal*, no. *Gender* (2018), p. 22.
[60] SANDFA, WADC, UWH, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, *The Star*, "WANS Regulations Gazetted", 8/10/1943.
[61] SANDFA, WADC, UWH, Box 261, 208, South Africa – Women, *The Star*, "WANS Regulations Gazetted", 8/10/1943.
[62] SANDFA, WADC, UWH, Box 261, 208 South Africa – Women, *The Star*, "WANS Regulations Gazetted", 8/10/1943.
[63] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 2.

who had been working as clerical staff for South Africa's navy before the creation of the WANS. Between the creation of the WANS and the end of the War, a further 269 women would become Swans, bringing the total number to 316.

The military sub-culture of the WANS – as a part of the SANF – was different from that encapsulated in the WAAS and WAAF; which were rooted in the cultures of the Army and Air Force, respectively. This not only explains some of the differences between these branches of the WADC beyond an organisational level, but also reveals why tensions arose between the Swans and the members of the other branches of the WADC.

The SANF was an amalgamation of the SDF and RNVR(SA) created in August 1942. As South Africa's Navy, the SANF was given the task of guarding South Africa's ports from enemy attack.[64] After the entrance into the War of Japan in December 1941, attack by Japanese submarines was seen as a particular threat. The activities of the SANF were expanded in 1942 to include rescue services for merchant ships sunk in South African waters by German U-boats.[65] Although some South African naval vessels aided in minesweeping operations in the Mediterranean throughout the War,[66] most of the activities of the SANF took place at home. South Africa's army and Air Force, in comparison, were deployed abroad in several different campaigns.[67]

This is not to suggest that the SANF was less important to South Africa's war effort, but it does explain why the manpower needs of the SANF was far less than those of the Army and Air Force.[68] In the words of Smuts, this was because the "task of maintaining these forces [the army and Air Force] in the field, is a factor of major importance in my manpower considerations".[69] This explains why the SANF was the smallest of South Africa's three arms of service during World War II. According to Van der Waag, between 1939 and 1945, the South African Army counted some 132 194 white male full-time volunteers; the SAAF 44 569 and the SANF only 9 455.[70] The SANF made up only 5% of the total (white) manpower of the

[64] André Wessels, "The South African Navy and Its Predecessors, 1910–2010: A Century of Interaction With Commonwealth Navies", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 38, no. 2 (2010), p. 112 & Van der Waag, *A Military History of South Africa*, p. 190.
[65] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, pp. 190-191.
[66] SADF Archives, "SA Forces in the Second World War", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 19, no. 3 (1989), pp. 44-45.
[67] See: SADF Archives, "SA Forces in the Second World War".
[68] H. R. Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, (Simon's Town: The Naval Heritage Trust, 2008), pp. 57-58.
[69] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 59.
[70] Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p. 176.

UDF during World War II. The Royal Navy, by comparison, had some 200 000 officers and men at the beginning of the War.[71]

Just as the SANF was the smallest of the three arms of the UDF, the WANS was the smallest branch of the WADC. With only 316 members, the WANS made up just over 1% of the total womanpower of the WADC. In comparison to the WAAS and WAAF – which accounted for 68% and 31% respectively – the WANS was minuscule. Due to the small number of women in this service, the ratio of SANF men to WANS women was 30:1. The high ratio of men to women in the Navy is also significantly different to the other two arms of service.[72]

The total number of women who could serve in the WANS was strictly capped, unlike the WAAS and WAAF. The maximum allowable number of posts in a military body was known as 'the Establishment'. This was calculated according to how many naval clerical posts were already occupied by service women (from the WAAS), how many clerical posts could be taken over by servicewomen, and how many were needed for technical posts.[73] Added to this was some leeway for "wastage": the loss of staff due to discharge or illness. This was known as the Training Reserve; which was made up of "extra people gainfully employed while in excess of immediate requirements".[74] The WAAS and WAAF both operated on a 20% reserve, while the WANS had a reserve of only 14%.[75] Again, the reason for the smaller reserve was that the WANS had to be kept small in number for financial reasons. The Establishment figure that had been calculated for the WANS was 250 posts, 30 in the Training Reserve and one officer, bringing the total available posts to 281; although the actual number of women serving fluctuated over the course of the War.

Capping numbers was simply an issue of finances.[76] During the preliminary discussions between Dalgliesh and Headquarters in Pretoria between 1942 and 1943, much focus was placed on the cost to the UDF of creating a new women's unit for the Navy (rather than simply continuing to use WAAS attached to the Navy). Much of this discussion was centred on the provision of new uniforms. Providing the WANS with a distinct uniform, was after all

[71] https://www.naval-history.net/WW2CampaignRoyalNavy.htm (27/08/2020)
[72] Statistics calculated from figures provided in Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*; SADF Archives, "SA Forces in the Second World War", p. 47; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* p. 176.
[73] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 3.
[74] Laver, p. 3.
[75] Laver, p. 4.
[76] Laver, p. 4.

supposed to revive the recruitment slump.[77] While the merits were carefully weighed in the deliberations, other members of the high command maintained that it would cost too much.

By August 1943, the WANS were designated their own distinct uniform but nothing more. There would be "no new headquarters, no separate housing",[78] as there had been for the WAAS and WAAF when these two branches were created. Instead, the Swans were expected to live at home[79] or share barracks with WAAS or WAAF and workspace with the SANF, as needed. However, as more Swans were recruited and began to take on work at naval stations, provisions had to be made to accommodate these women. At isolated naval bases, like Saldanha Bay, women's barracks and other facilities like sick bays had to be built from scratch.[80]

The demands from UDF Headquarters to keep the number of Swans low had an impact on the organisational structure of the WANS. This was most obvious in terms of the command structure of the Swans. As shown in Chapter 2, the rank structure used by the WADC and the UDF were similar. The rank titles given to servicewomen in the WAAS and WAAF were the same as those used by servicemen; although in some cases a feminised version was used, for example air*woman* was the lowest rank in the WAAF compared to air*man* in the SAAF. The same was true for the WANS. The most obvious difference in rank titles between the WANS and the SANF, was the use of "Swan" in place of "Seaman".[81] The term "Seawoman" was briefly suggested, but the nickname Swan had already taken flight.[82]

For members of the WADC, promotion was capped to reinforce the women's military status as secondary to that of the fighting men of the UDF.[83] This restriction ensured that servicewomen could not hold authority over servicemen.[84] This meant that the highest available rank for the WAAS and WAAF was Lieutenant-Colonel. However, the restrictions on the size of the WANS Establishment meant that provision was made for only one Commissioned Officer with the rank of Second Officer (2/O). This was equivalent to the rank of Captain in the army.[85]

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[77] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[78] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 3.
[79] As discussed in Chapter 2, members of the WADC – unlike servicemen of the UDF – were permitted to live at home during their service provided they lived close enough to where they worked.
[80] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, pp. 89-90.
[81] Appendix A.
[82] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. viii.
[83] As discussed in Chapter 2.
[84] J. B. Elshtain: "Women & War" in *Oxford History of Modern War*, C. Townsend (ed.), p. 307.
[85] Third Officer (3/O) did exist but only used in distinct cases as transition between CPO and 2/O.

The one officer was 2/O (Miss) Brenda Elizabeth Skyrme. Before her military service, Skyrme had completed a Bachelor's degree with honours in English, had spent a year working in the civil service where she had learned to type and obtained various Red Cross certificates.[86] She had attested to the WAAS on 18 September 1940 and quickly rose through the ranks passing the officer's promotion course at the top of her class; gaining promotion to Lieutenant. By the age of 23, she served as Officer Commanding of the Wynberg WAAS barracks, WAAS Recruiting Officer in Cape Town and Adjutant of the WAAS detachment in Cape Town.[87] Her previous civilian and military experience weighed in her favour when the appointment for the head of WANS was under consideration. Skyrme was officially transferred from the WAAS to the WANS on 1 September 1943, becoming the first Swan.

In her new position as the leading officer of the WANS, Skyrme would be responsible "for the duties of recruiting and organising of the new unit".[88] She filled the same role as her equivalents Lt. Col. (Mrs) Lugtenburg and Maj. (Mrs) Doreen Dunning in the WAAS and WAAF, respectively. As head of the WANS, Skyrme was given the title of Staff Officer WANS (SOWANS).

As Staff Officer of the Swans, Skyrme had to balance multiple roles. On the one hand, in her position as SOWANS, Skyrme (like Lugtenburg and Dunning) was responsible for all aspects of the daily running of the WANS. In this capacity her duties included: recruiting and selecting applicants, overseeing the attestation of all Swans, correspondence, maintaining personal records and service certificates, upholding discipline and welfare, discharges, drafting standing orders and ensuring that dress regulations were properly carried out.[89] This was the military side of her work.

On the other hand, Skyrme was also responsible for taking care of the wellbeing of the Swans. In the words of Laver, Skyrme:

> had to be a housing manager; a supervisory housekeeper; a hostel matron; a health and hygiene inspector; a social worker; a spiritual advisor, marriage counsellor, welfare officer; consultant on legal, medical and financial matters; an expert on military protocol and security; a police woman; but also a mother-figure for the disheartened and desperate who needed encouragement

[86] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 25.
[87] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 25.
[88] WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, WAAS Officer – Transfer to Women's Auxiliary Naval Service for Duty on SANF Directorate, 7/9/1943.
[89] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 25.

or comfort.[90]

What this shows is that as Staff Officer of the Swans, Skyrme was simultaneously a naval officer and a mother-figure. There was a duality in her place as a woman in the masculine sphere of the military, a place where women had traditionally been excluded. As head of the WANS, Skyrme was also the head of a "military family". Military effectiveness is predicated on the effectiveness of small-group bonding.[91] The unit to which a soldier belongs becomes a substitute family. However, servicewomen "[faced] the challenge of managing and thriving in both worlds", military and civilian.[92] If, as stated by Elshtain, "women were the guardians of the family; men, the protectors of the state",[93] then a woman such as Skyrme had to be both guardian and protector.

Despite the responsibility and variety of her work as Staff Officer, for the first several months of the Swans' existence, Skyrme – as the only commissioned Swan officer – was alone at the helm. An early call for assistance – in the form of five upper-deck officers[94] was mooted, probably because the unit was considered still too small to warrant any further administrative support. It was only in March 1944 that Joan Corder was appointed as the first Chief Petty Officer, who would serve as Skyrme's deputy. After CPO (Miss) Corder's demobilisation in May 1945, she was succeeded by CPO (Mrs) Stella Hattingh as Skyrme's deputy.[95] When Skyrme retired from the Swans on 8 October 1945, her post as SOWANS was taken over by Hattingh.[96]

The small size of the WANS command, consisting of only the SOWANS and one deputy, affected the chain of command through the rest of the service. When servicewomen were deployed to clerical branches or defence installations of the Army or Air Force, they fell under the command of an Officer Commanding (OC) of the WAAS or WAAF. She, in turn, was subordinate to the (male) OC of the Army or Air Force detachment to which the *Springdoes* were attached.[97] However, as discussed in Chapter 2, this title did not exist in the SANF. In

[90] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 26.
[91] Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 278.
[92] Patricia M. Shields, "Dynamic Intersection of Military and Society," in *Handbook of Military Sciences*, ed. A. Sookermany, 2020, p. 11.
[93] Elshtain, "Women and War," 2005, p. 307.
[94] In naval parlance, "upper deck officers" refers to commissioned officers.
[95] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 27.
[96] Laver, p. 28.
[97] See: Chapters 2 and 3.

addition, an OC had to be a commissioned officer. The WANS Establishment only provided for one commissioned officer: S/O (Miss) Skyrme. Instead, the Swans fell directly under the command of the SANF Commanding Officer.[98]

On the one hand, this difference in structural organisation between the WANS and the other two branches of the WADC is once again related to the directive from UDF Headquarters to keep the WANS small. On the other, it also points to a close relationship between the male and female sides of the South African navy during World War II; although the WANS and SANF were never officially amalgamated as was the case with the WAAF and SAAF.

In addition to the comparatively limited command structure of the WANS, the possibility of advancements and promotions was also limited for Swans. In the words of Laver: "It was not possible to give higher rank or rating to some splendid P/Os – who, it was stated by more than one person, would certainly have been made officers in the other larger sections of the WADC".[99] There are a variety of reasons as to why this was so.

Firstly, economic concerns seem, once again, to be the greatest determining factor for the relative lack of promotion opportunities for the Swans. From Laver's account of the system of advancements and promotions used in the WANS, advancement through the ranks of the WANS was hampered "so that the aims of the central government might be achieved";[100] namely, winning the war at minimal cost. What this meant was that even though a Swan had the necessary criteria to be promoted – based on a combination of seniority, qualifications or having proved her worth – she might not be advanced as the Establishment had to conform to the original financial restrictions.[101]

Secondly, advancement courses – such as the WADC Efficiency Course – were not readily available to Swans. Cdr. W.J. Copenhagen, who took charge of the Swans during their basic training, suggested that advancement for Swans be run on same lines as for Seamen through advancement courses. However, this was never implemented because it was not possible to release sufficient numbers of Swans for the quarterly courses due to their small numbers.[102] Clericals Swans, in particular could not be spared from their work.[103]

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[98] In this case, this is the naval usage of the term Commanding Officer and is equivalent to the Army and Air Force's term Officer Commanding. See Appendix A.
[99] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 23
[100] Laver, p. 22.
[101] Laver, p. 23.
[102] Laver, p. 23.
[103] Clerical Swans even had difficulty being released from their work to attend the Disciplinary Course to complete their basic training, as discussed below in Section 5.3.

Finally, the chances of gaining promotion were different for the two sides of the WANS: the Clerical and Technical Branches. Promotion was most difficult for clerical Swans. Unlike technical Swans, clerical Swans did not have the same opportunities to take courses and acquiring skills.

The differences between the WANS and the other two branches of the WADC were not only structural but are also related to its organisational identity. As shown in Chapters 3 and 4, the WAAS and WAAF assumed elements of the divisional organisational culture of the army and Air Force; thus creating their own identity as military units.

These differences in military traditions became especially visible where Swans and Waasies shared barracks. This was a not uncommon occurrence; particularly in the early days of the unit's existence when it was decided at UDF Headquarters that dedicated barracks for the WANS would not be created. As the WAAS (and WAAF) had already established barracks around the Union, it was considered more economically viable for members of the small, fledgling unit to be quartered with other service women where possible.[104] However, this arrangement proved difficult in some instances due to differences in tradition and rules between the arms of service. In some instances, this led to friction.

P/O (Miss) Valerie Tarr was billeted at Green Point Barracks alongside Waasies from Special Signals and Coastal Artillery. According to Tarr: "It didn't prove too successful having naval and military service women in one camp. Naval personnel's day-by-day movements fell under different rules from those of the Military, and I think we were resented to a certain degree".[105] P/O (Miss) Sheila Maspero, who lived with Waasies at a WAAS camp in Cape Town while completing her Higher Submarine Detectors course, highlighted two areas of conflict in her reminiscences. The first was seemingly innocuous but led to a "sort of running guerrilla war" between the Swans and Waasies: making beds.[106] The Navy made their beds in the morning while Army rules dictated that blankets be folded. The Swans quartered at this camp rebelled against being compelled to adhere to Army rules, as they saw themselves primarily as Navy servicewomen. While the Swans were rebelling against one set of military rules, they conformed to another.

The second difference that caused friction between the different groups of servicewomen was the wearing of civilian clothing. Navy rules dictated that servicewomen

[104] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 107.
[105] Laver, p. 335.
[106] Laver, p. 302.

could wear civvies when off-duty. However, the Swans were compelled to abide by Army rules when in the barracks which stated that personnel had to wear uniforms at all times while in camp (unless granted a permit).[107] In Maspero's words: "Our girls were always wanting to go out in civvies but we weren't allowed through the door unless we were in uniform".[108] These issues did not only arise between the WANS and the WAAS but also with the WAAF. L/Swan (Miss) Betty May was garrisoned at a WAAF camp in Port Elizabeth. Here, May and her fellow Swans were regularly "pulled up" for not saluting WAAF officers "under cover".[109] Naval tradition dictates that salutes are only given on deck not below; in other words, only when outdoors not inside.

While there are broad similarities in terms of organisational culture and identity between the WANS, WAAS and WAAF, it is the differences that make the Swans unique. The most obvious difference was in terms of size. The different manpower needs of the three arms of service meant that the numbers of Swans was strictly capped, unlike the numbers of Waasies or Waafs. This had a rolling effect for the command structure of the WANS; only one Swan was given the rank of commissioned officer. This limitation is also an indication of the differences in military (sub-) cultures. The small (but significant) ways in which the navy did things differently affected the day-to-day actions of the Swans. Therefore, it is clear that while the WANS fell under the umbrella of the WADC, it had its own characteristics that differentiated it from its sister services and this was fundamentally shaped by being placed under the command of the SANF. This, by implication, had an impact on training in which desired behaviour was tapered to the naval world.

## 5.3 Learning to Row the Boat: Training

For the military, training is pivotal for instilling the culture of the organisation into newly recruited members.[110] Training imparts the organisation's specific "system of widely shared assumptions and values that give rise to typical behavior [*sic*.] patterns". [111] For the

[107] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-2 Wearing of Mufti , Wearing of Mufti by WAAS, 22/3/1943.
[108] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 302.
[109] Laver, p. 304.
[110] Frank Ledwidge, "Cracking On : British Military Culture and Doctrine," in *Losing Small Wars* (Yale University Press, 2011), p. 137.
[111] George G Gordon, "Industry Determinants of Organizational Culture," *The Academy of Management Review* 16, no. 2 (1991), p. 397.

Swans, this meant that they also had to be taught how to be "naval". As in the WAAS and WAAF, training took place on two levels. The first was basic training where the new recruits were taught the rules and regulations of military discipline. The second level was the specialised training given to the Swans that prepared them for the specific work that they would do in the SANF; either as clerical or technical Swans.

### 5.3.1 Creating a Feeling of Belonging: How the Disciplinary Course instilled Naval Military Culture

The Swans first true experience of naval life came from the two weeks of basic training held at HMSAS "Unitie",[112] the South African Naval Training base on the foreshore of Table Bay. In naval parlance, this period of basic training was known as the Disciplinary Course or the Seamanship Course.[113]

Between the creation of the WANS in 1943 and the end of the War in 1945, 278 Swans passed through the Disciplinary Course in 14 groups.[114] Only 39 Swans did not take the course, suggesting that this was not as obligatory as expected.[115] The majority of those that did not take the course were part of the founding group of the Swans. There were two reasons for this. The first is that these women had already undergone basic training through the WAAS and so knew the ins and outs of military discipline (albeit in a different arm of service). They had also been exposed to the specific requirements of the Navy through their work. There was, therefore, no pressure to attend the course before starting their naval work. The second reason was rooted in practical necessity. As these women were already employed in clerical posts with the SANF, their male superiors felt that they could not be spared from their work. The few new entrant Swans who did not attend the Disciplinary course were also directly depolyed due to a pressing need for clerical staff. One Swan, L/Swan (Miss) Janet Vincent, for reasons that are not clear, passed the course twice.[116]

As in the other branches of the WADC, the primary function of the Disciplinary Course was to (re)socialise civilian woman as effective members of the armed forces.[117] Under the

[112] A long-standing tradition in the Royal Navy that was carried over to the SANF is to give shore establishments ship's designations.
[113] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 33 & p. 308.
[114] Laver, pp. 39-40.
[115] Laver, p. 40.
[116] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 44.
[117] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London and New York: Granta Press, 1999), p. 70; Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge, UK: University

watchful eyes of Cdr. W.J. ("Copey") Copenhagen, CO of HMSAS "Unitie", the fledgling Swan learned the basic skills needed to serve in the SANF. Although Laver describes the Disciplinary Course as "a course of instruction so utterly different from any undergone before by impressionable girls and young women",[118] much of the training that the Swans received had a similar focus to that received by their sisters in the WAAS and WAAF. The syllabus for the Wans' Disciplinary course of July 1944, for example, included lectures on the "Upkeep of Kit and Dress", "SANF Organisation", and "Ranks and Ratings"; as well as almost daily squad drill exercises.[119] In other words, just like Private (Miss) Mary Benson in the WAAS, the Swans first had to "[learn] to salute".[120]

Although learning the fundamentals of military discipline and organisation was key to transforming the women into effective members of the WADC,[121] they also had to become effective members of the SANF. This meant that the Swans also had to be specifically prepared for working life within the Navy.[122] As noted above, the importance of training – particularly giving recruits a thorough grounding in military rules and ways of doing – lies in preparing soldiers for their work.[123] Thus they also have to be prepared for those elements of their work that were specific to the arms of service to which they belonged. This meant that the Disciplinary Course also included lectures on "Naval Terms", "Naval Customs" and "Seamanship".[124] P/O (Miss) Lucy Ellis recalled that "to most of [the Swans] the subjects [they] were taught at [HMSAS] 'Unitie' were as unaccustomed as a trip to Mars" but that the knowledge that Ellis and her fellow Swans gained during the Disciplinary Course "certainly helped to settle [them] into naval life, and gave a good understanding of the things [they] had to deal with".[125] This helped to reinforce the Swans' "feeling of belonging".[126] It also shows that the Swans had to learn to conform to the SANF's ways in order to maintain uniformity of behaviour across this arm of service.

This "feeling of belonging" would have been further reinforced through the rigorous nature of their basic training. The WANS Disciplinary Course was held to the same standards

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of Cambridge Press, 2001), p. 252; Jennifer G. Mathers, "Women and State Military Forces," in *Women and Wars*, ed. Carol Cohn (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), p. 127.

[118] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 33.

[119] Laver, p. 38.

[120] Mary Benson, *A Far Cry: The Making of a South African* (Pretoria: Sigma Press, 1996), p. 22. See Chapter 3.

[121] Mathers: "Women and State Military Forces" in *Women and Wars*, C. Cohn (ed.), p. 127.

[122] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 226.

[123] Goldstein: *War and Gender*, p. 252. & Bourke: *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 70.

[124] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 38.

[125] Laver, p. 226.

[126] Laver, p. 228.

as that underwent by South African seamen. According to Laver, even though the women were "entering an essentially male establishment, where very few concessions were made to Swans on the grounds of their being female, it was felt to be an enormous privilege".[127] This is evident in the fact that several of the lectures that were part of the Disciplinary Course were about aspects of naval work that were not related to what the Swans would do as navy women but were essential for navy people.

The work of the Swans was restricted to shore establishments. They would not go out to sea on naval vessels as part of their duties. In spite of this, the Swans had lectures on "Seamanship" and "Boat Work".[128] In these lectures, the Swans were taught the basics of what it meant to be a seaman and were taught practical information about the different parts of boats. The Swans were also given practical instruction in "boat pulling" where the Swans were taught to row and manoeuvre a row boat. This was hard, physical work that led to, in the words of P/O (Miss) Lucy Ellis, "a fine crop of blisters".[129] According to Ellis, their male instructor encouraged the Swans to compete in races with male ratings who were also undergoing their Disciplinary Course.[130] A great reason for this equitable treatment was the influence of Copenhagen. He saw the course as important and argued that the Swans be held to the same standards of discipline as male ratings.[131]

### 5.3.2 Already Trained for the Jobs they Would Do: The Lack of Clerical Training in the WANS

After the cygnets completed their Disciplinary Course, as in the WAAS and the WAAF, further courses of specialised training was necessary to prepare these servicewomen for their work detail. Work in the WANS was divided into two branches: Clerical and Technical. Unlike the WAAS, which implemented clerical training courses in 1942,[132] the WANS provided almost no specialised training for Swans who went into the Clerical and Communications Branch of the WANS.[133] For the first cohort of Swans who had already been through both basic and specialised training courses as members of the WAAS, dedicated courses of clerical

[127] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 33.
[128] Laver, p. 38
[129] Laver, p. 228
[130] Laver, p. 228
[131] Laver, p. 33.
[132] SANDFA, WADC, Box 1, AG(W)F 1-1 WAAS Courses of Instructions in Shorthand and Typing, Clerical training course: Members of the WAAS, 29/10/1941.
[133] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 31. The only formal training course opened for clerical Swans was an Accounting Machine Operators Course in held in Cape Town in 1946. Only two Swans attended (Laver, p. 44).

training were not necessary. These women had initially been selected for work with the navy on the basis that they were "already trained for the posts they occup[ied]".[134] It was, therefore, not necessary to (re)train them when they became Swans. What is suggested here is that training was expected to impart broad military rules, not divisional differences, as well as specific practical skills for specific work details which transcended the divisions of WAAS, WAAF and WANS. As important as training may have been for socialisation of the servicewomen, it is evident that divisional culture and identity may well have also been appropriated more on an informal level within day-to-day interactions, rather than through the prescribed divisional training courses.

New entrant clerical Swans – those who joined the WANS directly, rather than moving from the WAAS – had to learn on the job. Most of these women had qualified as typists or bookkeepers before volunteering, but not all. L/Swan (Miss) Joyce Reid, for example, had to be shown how to operate a telephone switchboard.[135] The reasons for not providing the WANS with dedicated clerical or communications training – as was done for the WAAS and WAAF – are partly embedded in the pressing need that the WANS and the SANF had for clerical staff. This meant that clerical Swans were often put to work immediately. This is evidenced by the fact that Clerical Swans often attended the Disciplinary Course after already having started their service, rather than immediately after attestation.[136] Added to this was the ever-present pressure from Headquarters to keep the running costs of the WANS low.[137] A final reason for the comparative lack of clerical training given to the Swans – in comparison to the WAAS and WAAF – is rooted in the existence of the distinct military sub-culture of the Navy.

Gaining a good understanding not only of clerical work but how this functioned in the milieu of the Navy, meant that the Swans not only knew *how* to do their work but also *why* it was important; both to the SANF and to the larger war effort. While working the Swans quickly had to learn how to work office equipment (like duplicators or telex machines) but more importantly they also had to grasp the intricacies of "naval accounting, storekeeping and other administrative routines".[138] The importance of understanding the specific naval elements of their work is reflected in Ellis's recollections where she gives the example of a Clerical Swan:

> passing signals by 'phone all day long, would take far greater

[134] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 5.
[135] Laver, p. 31.
[136] Laver, p. 40.
[137] Laver, pp. 3-4.
[138] Laver, p. 31.

> care in her work when she knew that the message would ensure the accurate and speedy supply of stores and equipment to some gallant little ship.[139]

Not only did the writer have to know the practical steps to pass signals correctly, but having a grounding in the specific needs of the Navy also helped to ensure that she would do this effectively as she knew why it was important to do so in the larger context of SANF's war effort. The training of technical staff was, however, much more intricate and had a larger impact on the desired sense of belonging to the broader SANF division.

### 5.3.3 Specialised training for Duties of a Specialist Nature: The Focus on Technical Training for the Swans

The bulk of specialised training courses available for the WANS was focused on those Swans selected to undertake technical work. The first group of Clerical Swans had previously gained experience for their jobs through the WAAS and the WAAF; all that remained was to learn those elements of the work that was peculiar to the Navy. However, due to the specialised nature of naval work, simply transferring WAAS or WAAF technicals to the WANS was not feasible as this would be "uneconomical and unsound".[140] According to the Director of the SANF: "the duties of the SANF are of a specialist nature […] and it would be necessary to select and train personnel for these particular duties".[141] The primary reason for wanting to train Swans for technical "work peculiar to a naval force" was, as was the case for all other auxiliary forces, to release the men who occupied these positions for active service in the SANF.[142]

As noted in Chapter 3, by April 1944 there were at least 15 distinct general courses available to Waasies and Waafs.[143] In addition to these courses, specialised technical training was offered for armorers, map-makers, artisans and mechanics, amongst others. In comparison, there were only three distinct types of training courses available for Swans in the technical

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[139] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 226.
[140] WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[141] WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[142] WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[143] SANDFA, "Our South African Regiments: The Women's Auxiliary Army Service" in *Nongqai*, April 1944, Vol XXXV, No. 4. p. 469.

stream.[144] These were: the Harbour Defence Operator Courses (Third and Second Class); the Controlled Mining Operators Course; and the Higher Submarine Detectors Course.

The first Harbour Defence Operator, Third Class ($HDO_3$) course ran from 31 October until 29 November 1943.[145] Thirteen Swans – all from the first Disciplinary Course – passed with a First Class distinction. These were also the first Swans to undergo technical training. There were nine $HDO_3$ courses in total, with the last ending in April 1944, attended by a total of 156 Swans.[146]

The first $HDO_3$ passing class was so successful that the Anti-Submarine Defence Officer – Lt/Cdr C. Montgomery – raised the passing standard for Swans above that for male personnel on the same course bringing the standard almost in line with the HDO, Second Class ($HDO_2$) standard.[147] Yet, only 14% failed. Of these 22 who failed, 12 were given an extra week's intensive training followed by a second examination, and only seven had to repeat the course.[148]

The $HDO_2$ course furthered the knowledge and skills gained in the $HDO_3$ course and was "very intensive".[149] There were only two $HDO_2$ classes – both in 1944.[150] All 21 Swans who took part in the two courses passed; some with "extremely high marks".[151] The main aim of the HDO courses – both held on Robben Island – was to teach the Swans to operate harbour defence asdic apparatus[152] and indicator loop systems.[153] During these two courses, the Swans were given a grounding in elementary electrics and magnetism. The women were also taught visual ship recognition.

A second field in which technical Swans were trained was as Controlled Mining Operators. This course took place at Saldanha Bay, the only port in South Africa where a

[144] While the Swans also could take part in the Controlled Mining Wireman course, this is not discussed here as it was a correspondence course that only four Swans took on in their spare-time. They were not specifically deployed in this capacity after training but took on extra Wireman work during the normal course of their duties as CM Watchkeepers (Laver, p. 35).
[145] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 61.
[146] Laver, pp. 41-42.
[147] Laver, p. 35.
[148] Laver, p. 42.
[149] Laver, p. 35.
[150] Laver, p. 42.
[151] Laver, p. 35. No third $HDO_2$ course was held. Due to the diminishing threat of U-boat attacks on South African waters by 1945, it was not deemed necessary. For the same reason, no $HDO_1$ course was held.
[152] A precursor to Sonar first developed by the RN Anti-Submarine division in 1917. Harbour Defence Asdics are stationary and mounted to the sea-bed, in contrast to ship-mounted Asdics.
[153] Long lengths of cable which are laid on the sea-bed of harbours that use magnetic sensing to detect the movement of (enemy) submarines overhead.

Controlled Minefield was laid due to its strategic proximity to Cape Town.[154] Electricity and magnetism were again key subjects, as were practical elements of watch-keeping and firing drills.[155] There were three Controlled Mining classes – in April and May 1944 and in January 1945 – attended by 33 Swans. As with the pioneering $HDO_3$ class, these Swans attained extremely high marks in their examinations and were praised as being "remarkable" by a Lieutenant Commander of the Royal Naval Reserve as they had performed extremely well "not [having] had previous experience of this type of study".[156] The second class was equally remarkable. Out of the 17 Swans who passed, 14 had already undertaken the $HDO_3$ course granting them dual Anti-Submarine Fixed Defence (A/SFD) qualifications. These 14 Swans were given further training on an "Attack Teacher". This was an electronic training device that could simulate "every possibility likely to be encountered by a watchkeeper".[157] The Attack Teacher was a simulator table where electric circuits under a frosted glass sheet controlled two small lights; one representing the depth charge controlled by the trainee, and the other the enemy vessel controlled by the Asdic Officer.[158] When the enemy light had been located, the trainee had to "fire" the charges and confirm that the enemy had been hit.[159]

The highest qualification available to the technical Swans was the Higher Submarine Detector (HSD) course which ran from 16 October 1944 to 28 February 1945 at HMSAS "Gannet", the Anti-Submarine base in Table Bay. This course was attended by six Swans, all but one of whom, passed.[160] Instruction started with an intensive six-week course on electronics held in the Physics Department at the University of Cape Town followed by practical instruction in repairing and servicing ships', asdics and operating the Attack Teacher.[161] During the HSD course, the Swans were also taught how to make small depth-charges. Although this would not be part of their duties upon deployment, knowing how depth charges were assembled and how these anti-submarine weapons worked gave the HSD Swans a deeper knowledge of their work than they necessarily needed in practice.[162] Providing servicewomen with surplus knowledge was not unique to this course. As reported by Summerfield, servicewomen in

[154] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 221.
[155] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 36.
[156] Laver, p. 36.
[157] Laver, p. 36.
[158] Laver, p. 300.
[159] Laver, p. 71.
[160] Laver, p. 42. P/O (Miss) Valerie Jeudwine only failed by one mark but was not able to repeat the course as there was no second HSD course held. Much like the cessation of the HDO courses, this was because operational needs had changed due to the late stage of the war.
[161] Laver, p. 36.
[162] Laver, p. 36.

Britain were also "taught rather more than they needed in practice" to fully prepare these women for any eventuality.[163]

The technical Swans were given surplus knowledge "tucked away in the back of [their] brain[s]".[164] This shows that these South African servicewomen were not only expected to be able to take over men's work but also had to learn to do it "quickly through intensified training programmes, which brought them up to levels of skill in a few weeks which men normally achieved only after serving apprenticeships that lasted years".[165] Not only was servicewomen's training tailored to the jobs that they would do, but that the Swans were held to high passing standards that were often above those for men undergoing similar training. While high passing standards were necessary on a practical level – to ensure that the work was done properly – the success of the technical Swans in their training courses is significant when the contemporary educational context of these women is taken into account.

Generally speaking, girls were not afforded the same opportunities for education as boys.[166] As noted by P/O (Miss) Lucy Ellis, who was part of the final $HOD_3$ course, "in the 'thirties and 'forties less emphasis was placed on applied maths and science in the education of girls".[167] Although Ellis left school "somewhat prematurely to spend time with a dying father",[168] she was one of the few to have studied Elementary Electrics – a key part of the HDO courses – at school. For many others, this was a "completely foreign subject".[169] CPO (Miss) Joan de Beer, for example, passed both the first $HOD_3$ course and the HSD course despite not having had much school-level maths education. She recounts that their electronics lecturer on the HSD course "could not understand why [they] could not do university standard maths!"[170] Because of this disadvantage, several Swans expressed surprise when they found that they had passed their technical courses, with flying colours.[171]

Through their training, the Swans were ingrained with the necessary knowledge and understanding of both military and naval culture. The Disciplinary Course served to recreate

[163] Penny Summerfield, "The Patriarchal Discourse of Human Capital: Training Women for War Work 1939-1945", *Journal of Gender Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993), pp. 189-205.
[164] Summerfield.
[165] Summerfield.
[166] Cherryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (Claremont: David Philip, 1991), p. 18 & Nancy L. Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa.," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001), p. 81.
[167] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 237.
[168] Laver, p. 223.
[169] Laver, p. 237.
[170] Laver, p. 216.
[171] Laver, p. 216, 237.

civilian women into servicewomen. The focus on SANF-specific lectures in the Disciplinary course shows that this recreation was centred on the importance of understanding what the Swans' place was in naval structures.

The identity of the WANS as a distinct service becomes more apparent through the division made between the Clerical and Technical Branches' training. As is true for the WAAS and WAAF, "supplying labour appropriately trained for the jobs that needed doing" was the dominant concern for specialised training.[172] However, it is clear from the emphasis on Technical training that this was the main area where the Swans were to replace seamen and shift even closer to that less-auxiliary role.

## 5.4 Deployment: Clerical and Technical Branches

The Swans were deployed in two streams of work, in either the Clerical or Technical Branches of the WADC. This section argues that the Clerical Branch fell within the auxiliary arena of women's wartime military involvement. The Swans Technicals, however, were trained as specialists in technological advancements in naval combat as used in coastal defence. Through the focus on technical training (and with it deployment in a technical capacity) it is clear that the focus for the WANS Technicals was placed more on helping with *defence*. Therefore, it is argued that the Technical Swans took on a less auxiliary role; one that moved closer to the combat stage of women's integration into the military.[173]

### 5.4.1 "Just another office job": WANS Clerical and Communications Branch

WAAS clericals had been serving with naval forces in South Africa since September 1940.[174] When the WANS officially came into being as a distinct branch of the WADC in August 1943, the first cohort of Swans were all clerical staff and remained in this capacity for the first two months of the service's existence; training for WANS technicals only opened in

[172] Summerfield, "The Patriarchal Discourse of Human Capital: Training Women for War Work 1939-1945".
[173] D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 318.
[174] SANDFA, WADC, Box 51, AS 22-12 WAAS employed at Cape Command "Seaward Defence", Replacements, 3/9/1940.

October of that year. Over the course of the war, the number of WANS clericals grew steadily, with a total of 155 Swans serving in this capacity.

Members of the WANS Clericals and Communications Branch[175] were employed at SANF shore establishments throughout South Africa. The largest concentration, by far, was in Cape Town.[176] The next largest concentration of WANS clericals was at HMSAS "Congella" in. Durban, the largest port after Cape Town.[177] Only a handful of Swans served as clericals in Port Elizabeth, East London and Saldanha Bay.[178] The smallest concentrations of Swan clericals could be found inland. Only six Swans in total served in Pretoria over the course of the War, all of them in offices of the DSANF. The only Swan to be stationed in Johannesburg was 3/O (Miss) Joan Ellis.[179]

Unlike WAAS and WAAF clericals, no WANS clericals served overseas during the War. The main duty of the SANF was to safeguard the strategic sea route around the Cape.[180] This does not, however, mean that the Swans accepted their "landlocked" position. Much like Airwoman Ethel Price and other WAAFs who were excluded from the Middle East draft, as discussed in Chapter 4,[181] many Swans yearned to serve "Up North". L/Swan (Miss) Shelagh Ball remembers that she and several of her fellow-Swans requested to be seconded to the WRNS "hoping to go overseas".[182] They were unsuccessful in part due to the request being made at a late stage of the War and due to the need to preserve manpower within the South African forces, particularly given the limited size of the WANS.

Although they were scattered across the Union, the work undertaken by Swans clericals was similar no matter where they were deployed. Their work was further divided into two branches: Communications Branch and Clerical Branch. Those in the Communications Branch were primarily employed as "telephonists"; operating telephone switchboards and ensuring that naval communications were relayed smoothly and accurately between detachments and

[175] While the official title of this WANS Branch was the "Clericals and Communications Branch", it was generally referred to only as the "Clerical Branch" by the Swans and by SANF staff.
[176] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p.47.
[177] Laver, p. 49.
[178] Laver, p. 52.
[179] Laver, pp. 49-49. Ellis was the third Swan to be granted officer rank. Early in 1946 she worked for the Directorate of Demobilisation. This post had to be occupied by a WADC member with the rank of Lieutenant in the WAAS (Laver, p. 30)
[180] Wessels, "The South African Navy and Its Predecessors, 1910–2010: A Century of Interaction With Commonwealth Navies", p. 112.
[181] Jennifer Crwys-Williams, *A Country at War 1939-1945: Mood of a Nation* (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing, 1992), pp. 226-227.
[182] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 198.

departments. The Clerical Branch was mainly concerned with office work; the sort that "might have been for any one Swan just another office job, little different from that which myriads of young women were doing then".[183] It was only at the Imperial Cold Storage (ICS) Building in Cape Town where clerical work was further differentiated between those who worked in the Accounts Branch (dealing with the pay of serving men) and the Stores Branch (which clothed the SANF and provided the ratings with the trappings they needed to perform their duties).[184]

While the type of work undertaken by clerical Swans was little different from that done by scores of civilian women employed in offices, "the little differences [made] all the difference".[185] These were women in uniform, with military rank and embedded in the hierarchy of the UDF meaning that these were not civilian women doing civilian work.

The importance of having servicewomen do this work in the navy was twofold. Firstly, it was difficult to bring the needed numbers of civilian women into military work. This was because, as discussed in Chapter 2, women working in factories were paid higher rates for work that needed less training.[186] Secondly, servicewomen, through their training and integration into the military were more aware of the impact that their work had for servicemen. This is reflected in Ellis's example of a Clerical Swan "tak[ing] far greater care in her work" because she knew it would directly affect a fellow member of the SANF.[187]

Clerical work remained very much in the realm of "women's work". This is reinforced by P/O (Miss) Eleanor Spencer's recollection that, although she had wanted to "go Technical", her parents refused to allow her to join the Swans unless she worked in the Clerical branch to keep up her shorthand and typing speeds for work after the War.[188] Therefore, deployment of the Swans clericals was safely within the allowable borders of traditional feminine war work, placing their deployment within the auxiliary phase of women's wartime work. It was also part of the training which would secure work in a man's world after the war. Technical training was a slightly different matter.

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[183] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 46.
[184] Located at 10 Dock Road, the ICS Building housed administrative offices, with the Navy occupying the second floor. It was demarcated as a provincial heritage site in 1990.
[185] Laver, p. 46.
[186] SANDFA, WADC, Box 14, DR(W)F 66 Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF, Memorandum: Formation of a Women's ACF Unit. 4/12/1941 & Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa", p. 1191.
[187] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 226.
[188] Laver, p. 333.

### 5.4.2 Defending the Coastline: WANS Technical Branch as part of Home Defence

In contrast to the division of work between clericals and technicals seen in the WAAS and WAAF – where the majority of women were deployed in a clerical capacity – WANS technicals made up 51% of this service. This was not accidental. It is clear that this is what Dalgleish, as Director of the South African Naval Forces, had in mind since his initial, rejected call for a women's auxiliary service for the SANF. In his first letter to the Deputy Chief of Staff, Dalgleish states that in his proposed women's section "the majority of personnel will be required to be trained for technical work".[189] The abrupt rejection of his proposal did not diminish Dalgleish's view that due to the "specialist nature" of SANF work and the training required for this, it would be necessary to employ women "to a large extent for the operation of the Loop Indicator system, controlled mining and degaussing ranges".[190]

Dalgliesh's proposal that the Swans be deployed primarily in technical roles came to fruition when the service was officially established. The Establishment list for the WANS initially proposed three jobs for technical Swans. Here it was estimated that 130 Harbour Defence Operators would be needed; spread across Sub-Depot, Robben Island (Cape Town),[191] Umhlanga Naval Station (Durban), and North Arm Naval Station (Port Elizabeth). Thirteen Swans would be enlisted as Degaussing Recorders,[192] and two would be Dome Teacher Operators.[193]

This proposal for the womanpower needs of the WANS was set out before technical training officially commenced in October 1943. By the time the first Swans technicals had completed their training, the womanpower needs of the SANF had changed and the jobs that these women took over in reality were different to those set out on paper. The most obvious differences are that it was suddenly decided by naval authorities not to use women in the degaussing of ships (for reasons that are not made clear).[194] New demands were created with

[189] WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS 2-8-1942-7-9-1943, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[190] WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS 2-8-1942-7-9-1943, Organisation: SANF. Establishment of a Women's Section, n.d.
[191] The Swans replaced the AS-WAAS here in late 1943.
[192] The process of degaussing neutralises the magnetic field of a ship in order to help protect it from being detected by mine loops. Degaussing recorders registered the variations in the ship's magnetic field so that this protection mechanism could be periodically readjusted.
[193] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 62. The Dome Attack Teacher, by 1943, become known as simply the Attack Teacher.
[194] Laver, p. 62.

the creation of Saldanha Bay as a SANF detachment independent from Cape Town on 1 December 1944.

The three jobs that technical Swans did embark on were Harbour Defence Operators (HDO), Higher Submarine Detection (HSD) and in Controlled Mining (CM) Watchkeeping. All those who passed the exams were deployed. Swans involved in technical work were deployed at a number of naval sites along the Union's coastline that were key to defending South African waters and were transferred between Robben Island, Saldanha Bay, Port Elizabeth, and Durban according to the personnel needs of each detachment at different times.

The majority of technical Swans were employed in the capacity of HDO. The bulk of HDO Swans were stationed at Sub Depot, Robben Island (SDRI) due to the need to protect the Cape sea route. The first draft began their work by November 1943. In 1942, the SANF had replaced the Army as occupants of the Island because the strategic needs of the UDF had changed by this point in the War. There was a greater need for submarine surveillance than coastal artillery on Robben Island.[195] The men of the SANF were in turn replaced by the Swans in HDO work by the end of 1943.[196]

Swans also worked in the same role at North Arm Naval Station (NANS) in Port Elizabeth starting on 6 March 1944, and Umhlanga Naval Station (UNS) near Durban starting 20 March 1944. At each naval station, Swans took over the work from male ratings. On 16 June 1945 orders were issued to all SANF bases to reduce operations and all anti-submarine defences had ceased to function by mid-July.[197]

At SDRI, HDO daily watchkeeping duties were divided into five shifts or watches, each keeping watch for four hours with eight hours off to perform other duties or sleep.[198] NANS and UNS made use of "West Country watches" – six hours on duty – as the numbers of Swans deployed at these two stations was smaller.[199] Aside from these minor administrative differences, HDO work was run along much the same lines at all the naval bases. SDRI will be used as a template to describe the work done by HDOs as it housed the majority of deployed Swans.

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[195] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 215.
[196] Gordon-Cumming, p. 202.
[197] Gordon-Cumming, p. 243.
[198] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 239 & p. 215.
[199] Laver, p. 304.

While "on watch", HDO Swans were stationed in Watch Rooms to man the "eyes" and "ears" of the station. The Loop Room housed the station's "eyes". Operators sat in front of the recording rolls of the Indicator Loop System checking the tracings made by the recording needles for any activity. This was very sensitive equipment used to detect small vessels.[200] Harbour Defence Asdics (HDA) were the "ears". Popularly nicknamed the "Ha-de-hah Room", Swans wore headphones to listen for "pings" made by bodies passing over the Asdic.[201]

In addition to this highly technical work, a visual watch was also carried out. At the Battery Observation Post (BOP) – a squat concrete structure on Robben Island that was a relic left over by the AS-WAAS and Army's occupation of the island[202] – Swans were also stationed to "keep visual watch to match the underwater watch at Sub-Depot on [the HDAs]".[203] This was not only a second line of defence but also served to warn those using the sensitive electric equipment that large ships were passing over loops. This could damage the equipment and put them out of action – leaving the port temporarily unprotected. The sudden, loud ping of a friendly passing ship could also temporarily deafen an unsuspecting Swan perched on the "Ha-de-hah"![204]

Over the course of a four-hour watch, the Swans observing technical equipment – the Asdic sets and Indicator Loops – and those on visual watch at BOP changed over every half hour to avoid fatigue. Not only could the work become monotonous but, due to the high levels of concentration, watch keepers could quickly succumb to burn-out. Those on the HDA, for example, had a tendency to become "ping happy"– mistaking the echoes made by shoals of fish and other objects passing over the Asdic, for submarines – if left on duty for too long.[205]

Four of South Africa's five ports which had Anti-Submarine Fixed Defence (A/SFD) installations used Swans as watch keepers.[206] As HDOs, Swans replaced male ratings *en masse* as part of the need to release these men for more active duty, in line with Dalgliesh's vision for

[200] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 239.
[201] Laver, p. 240.
[202] As discussed in Chapter 3.
[203] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*. p. 298. Visual watches were not, it seems, prioritised at NANS or UNS because these two detachments were much smaller and had Army artillery and other military detachments nearby that took over much of this work.
[204] Laver, p. 240.
[205] Laver, p. 194.
[206] Laver, p. 72.

the WANS.[207] However, the replacement of potentially combatant men with non-combatant women was not the only reasoning for drawing navy women into this particular field of work.

Shortly after trained Swans began to take over A/SFD watchkeeping duties at SDRI, Brigadier General HS Wakefield, Deputy Chief of Staff, wrote to Chief of General Staff, Sir Pierre van Ryneveldt in February 1944. In this letter Wakefield points out that "males […] find the work very boring and it has been found from experience that their morale is seriously affected when employed on these monotonous watchkeeping duties".[208] Wakefield's assertion that the Swans were "more suitable for this type of work"[209] is based on gendered assumptions of ability; in this case that women were better suited for monotonous work. As pointed out by Nancy Clark, looking at the civilian employment of women in wartime production during World War II, this "sex-typing" of work was common.[210] This means that it was generally held by employers that one gender was better suited to certain types of work than the other.

Similar gendered expectations of ability – or lack thereof – were experienced by women in the WAAS and WAAF. The resistance, for example, encountered by WAAF mechanics for doing "men's work" – and the surprise of the men around them when the women proved to be "good at it" – illustrates that, to a degree, servicewomen in the other branches of the WADC were able to challenge this gendered barrier within their work.[211] In the case of the Swans, however, this took on a different form. Instead of having to disprove assumptions about their ability based on their gender (as the technical Waasies and Waafs did), by being good at their watchkeeping duties, the HDO Swans reinforced the stereotype Wakefield and others had that women are innately better at this monotonous type of work. And, they were praised for it.

Lt. Andrew Murray McGregor was one of the officers who trained HDO Swans on Robben Island, and became CO of SDRI in 1945. Having had experience with male ratings employed as A/SFD watchkeepers, McGregor was able to compare the ability of both male and female HDOs based on his own experience:

> Before the Swans came to the Island I had RN and SANF ratings under me on the A/S instruments; but I can honestly say that the Swans beat them absolutely. The standard of watchkeeping that

[207] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.
[208] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, pp. 61-62.
[209] Laver, p. 61.
[210] Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa", p. 1186.
[211] See Chapters 2 and 3.

> [the] girls reached was much higher than that of the men.[212]

This praise served to reinforce the notion that the Swans watchkeepers were good at their work, in support of the "sex-typing" of this work, but it also points out that Swans were more efficient at their job. McGregor clearly prefers the watchful eyes of the Swans than the arguably incompetent men of the SANF.

The lived experience of the HDO Swans, however, tells a different story. They did not (in reality) find the work of watchkeeping any less boring than their male counterparts. P/O (Miss) Sheila Maspero served as HDO at both SDRI and UNS. Maspero recalls that she and her fellow HDO Swans "tended to take books and letter writing with [them], something to do until [they] had to do a visual sweep".[213] Some also took their knitting with them to keep themselves busy.[214] Maspero adds that if the CO or any other superior officer came into the watchroom, the Swan on duty had to quickly hide the evidence of her busywork.

Using knitting to disctract oneself from the monotony of long watches was not unique to the Swans. In Britain, members of the ATS serving in AA batteries also brought knitting and embroidery with them to help break up the long "hours when nothing happened".[215] Male eyebrows were raised when these "feminine hobbies" first made their appearance at command posts, and it was initially forbidden for ATS members to do their handwork while on duty. However, male officers soon realised that this did not interfere with the women's readiness or efficiency and in the words of Kina Manton, the senior ATS officer of one of the first mixed AA regiments, "much fancy work was done in unpromising surroundings".[216]

On the one hand this shows that the women, in reality, found the work just as mundane as the men they replaced. On the other, this indicated resilience on the part of the Swans. These women were able to find strategies to occupy their time and relieve the boredom of this work; which the men they replaced did not seem to do. They quite simply could not afford to complain. They had to constantly prove their worth. The Swans were able to distract themselves, thereby not only avoiding boredom but also saving their focus for when it was most needed. This is a tale of resilience and feminine ingenuity.

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[212] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 69.
[213] Laver, p. 299.
[214] Laver, p. 299.
[215] Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p. 74.
[216] Crang, p. 74.

CM Watchkeeping was the second type of work done by the technical Swans. This took place at NBNB, Saldanha Bay, where Swans worked in Anti-Submarine Detection. This was the only port in South Africa to have installed Controlled Minefields; despite recommendations that several South African Ports should be equipped with this defence. In August 1942, Saldanha Bay was earmarked as a convoy assembly point due to it being a land-locked harbour where protection for a large number of ships could be provided by small and sheltered minefield and because of its proximity to Cape Town, the most important port that needed to be guarded by the SANF. Controlled Mining specialists arrived from Britain to assess the harbour and, by November of that year, the plans for Saldanha's controlled minefield were completed. The laying of the Guard Loops and Mine Loops was completed in March 1943 and the entire system was operational by mid-April.[217]

In the midst of these defensive considerations the potential use of women at NBNB was not ignored. According to Laver, practical talks to station women – then still "WAAS attached to SANF" – at Saldanha began in January 1943. However, this proposal was quickly shot down by Headquarters in Pretoria, as there were no separate accommodation or sick bay facilities for women at Saldanha.[218] By February 1944, these practical issues had been resolved and the first training for Swans as Controlled Mining Operators began in April 1944, a year after the system became operational.

The use of Swans as CMOs was short-lived. Swans were only deployed at NBNB for about a year. This was because a decision was made in early 1945 to end the Controlled Mining Operation at Saldanha as this was no longer deemed necessary. On 10 March 1945, Control System (CS) 84 ceased to be (wo)manned.[219] During the 11 months that CMO Swans were deployed at Saldanha, 35 Swans "[took] over the baton in the final lap of a relay race when they replaced male watchkeepers at CS 84".[220] Furthermore, they fulfilled a unique role, at least in terms of Commonwealth and US World War II military histories.

CM watchkeepers at NBNB followed broadly the same watchkeeping routines as the HDO Swans, but because the equipment CM Watchkeepers used was more technical, the

[217] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, pp. 221-222. Guard Loops are laid seaward of the mine-field to warn of an approaching vessel, while the Mine Loops are shorter and closer to the harbour. These can more accurately pin-point where the vessel is to fire with more precision.
[218] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 88.
[219] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 223.
[220] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 88.

protocols were different. When on watch duty, male ratings at CS 84 had alternated between the "Power Hut", "Control Hut" and "Telephone Post". The same watch structure was taken on by the Swans. Each part of the watch lasted 40 minutes before duties were rotated for the same reasons HDO Swans alternated between duties: to prevent fatigue.

At the Telephone Post, Swans kept visual watch over Saldanha Bay and communicated with ships and the Army Signal Station at Port War, recording any incidents. The second part of watchkeeping took place in the Control Hut, where the signature observation post was housed. Here Swans were on the lookout for the electric signature of any passing submarine on their screens. This skill was taught on the Attack Teacher. After the replacement of male watchkeepers by Swans, the women took over all these duties except the manning of the Power Hut – the battery and generator hut for the controlled mining system – which was always operated by a (male) Leading Seaman.[221] Swans, therefore, spent the third part of their watch duties cleaning, polishing and (most importantly for those keeping watch in the Telephone Post or Control Hut) making tea.[222]

In *Sailor-Women, Sea-Women, SWANS* Margaret Laver makes the claim that the 35 Swans deployed as Controlled Mining Watchkeepers were "the only women in the world […] to have done that work at the time".[223] The British Wrens were certainly deployed in a wider variety of jobs than their South African counterparts in the WANS. In her history of the WRNS, Marjorie Fletcher, a former Director of the WRNS, outlines a number of distinct jobs undertaken by the Wrens – both clerical and technical. However, very few of these involved watchkeeping and none were related to Controlled Mining operations. Similarly, no evidence could be found that women's naval auxiliaries in Australia, New Zealand, Canada or the US deployed women within Controlled Mining.

The third type of work undertaken by technical Swans was as HSDs. These were the "highest technicals". [224] Five Swans in total were trained and served in this capacity: P/O (Miss) Sheila Maspero, P/O (Miss) Phyllida Roper, CPO (Miss) Joan de Beer, P/O (Miss) Moyra Harvey, P/O (Miss) Elizabeth McNab.[225] After completing their intensive training in February 1945 – detailed above – these five Swans were employed at HMSAS "Gannet", located in the Cape Town Docks. Here, their work was divided into two main streams. First was the repair

[221] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 96.
[222] Laver, p. 290.
[223] Laver, p. 63.
[224] Laver, p. 71.
[225] Laver, p. 71.

and maintenance of asdic instruments. This technical work was similar to that undertaken by WAAS armourers or WAAF mechanics.[226] Similar work repairing or servicing equipment was done by the Wrens in Britain.[227]

The second stream of work undertaken by the HSD Swans was known as "operating the tables".[228] The table in question was the Attack Teacher. HSD Swans were not only expected to be able to run this (rather complex) piece of technology, but they also used it to train male officer and senior ratings in submarine warfare. These HSD Swans became instructors adding another level to their military service. Not only were they aiding in the defence of South Africa's coastline as part of the WANS Technical Branch but they were also directly preparing men for combat. In this regard, the work of HSD Swans was comparable to Waafs training SAAF pupil-pilots on the Link trainer.[229]

On one level, the unique emphasis in the WANS on Technical work can be explained in terms of the exigencies of manpower. As highlighted above, from 1942 the UDF experienced a crisis in recruiting. This, combined with a (white) population that was deeply divided in its support for the War,[230] meant that the most economical use had to be made of all available manpower; even if this meant using womanpower. On another level, it shows the different view that the SANF had towards its women auxiliaries; using them in a less auxiliary capacity from the beginning rather than building towards this as in the WAAS and WAAF. HDO and CM Watchkeeper Swans took over from men and HSD Swans taught them. Therefore, the Technical Branch of the WANS was one of the least auxiliary parts of the WADC. But the story does not end there.

## 5.5 The Swan who fired in Anger: WANS CM Watchkeepers as Combatant Section

The use of (wo)manpower in the SANF came to a head in an event described by Gordon-Cumming as the "only occurrence of operational interest at Saldanha"[231] and by Laver

[226] See Chapters 3 and 4.
[227] Fletcher, *The WRNS: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service*, pp. 41-72.
[228] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 301.
[229] See Chapter 4.
[230] Nasson: *South Africa at War 1939-1945*, p. 19.
[231] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 222.

as "the only event deserving of publicity in that brief and otherwise uneventful history"[232] of Controlled Mining at NBNB. On 1 June 1944, L/Swan (Miss) Sue Labuschage was given the order to fire two controlled mine loops on a suspected enemy submarine. The events of that night mark the only time that mines were fired on a (potential) enemy at NBNB.[233] In the history of the SANF's involvement in World War II, this was a minor event, but it is extremely significant in the history of the Swans. This marks the only instant in the history of the WADC where a servicewoman was given the order to fire, thus, even if only briefly, she became a combatant soldier.

On the night of 1 June 1944, a dance was held at the Klipvlei Barracks; an army barracks near NBNB. In the words of Labuschagne "a party was like manna in the desert" for the Swans at NBNB.[234] Everyone wanted to go. The Swans who were scheduled to be on First Watch that night asked to swop shifts so that they could go to the dance. "Feeling very kind-hearted that evening", L/Swan (Miss) Sue Labuschagne, L/Swan (Miss) Frieda Klonus and L/Swan (Miss) Elspeth MacFarlane agreed.[235] These three women would soon become known as the "Death Watch".[236] And Labuschagne would be dubbed "the Swan who fired in anger".[237]

Just before 22:00, Mine Loop 5 registered movement. No immediate action was taken as the Guard Loops recorded nothing. Gordon-Cumming speculated that this was likely an outgoing vessel that had not reported its intended movements.[238] Fifteen minutes later the harbour search lights were activated but no ship could be seen, indicating that a submarine might be present. At the same time Guard Loop 1 seemed to pick up a signature, however, that particular loop was renowned for being unreliable. By half past, the searchlights were turned off and the order was given that any further signature picked up by the Loops was to be regarded as hostile.[239]

According to Labuschagne, the "fun that evening started at about 23:00".[240] Klonus was on duty in the Control Hut, monitoring the screen for any further activity, when Mine Loop 6

[232] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 96.
[233] Gordon-Cumming, p. 223. Mines were detonated twice more at NBNB. In September 1944, defective mines were fired for "experimental and instructional purposes" and on 6 April 1945 the remaining mines were exploded after it was "deemed unnecessary to keep the system in operation" (Gordon-Cumming, p. 223).
[234] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 290.
[235] Laver, p. 290
[236] Laver, p. 290.
[237] Laver, p. 96.
[238] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 223.
[239] Gordon-Cumming, p. 223.
[240] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 290.

registered activity. The Officer of the Watch Lt de Beer called Lt Commander JWB Holmes, Controlled Mining Officer for South Africa and CO of CS 84. When Labuschange took over duty in the Control Room at 23:20, all officers were present. Mine Loop 5 then registered activity. Holmes gave Labuschagne the order to fire.[241] Two Mine Loops were detonated.[242]

No sign of wreckage was seen in the immediate aftermath of the explosions and the searches carried out by echo-sounding, ground sweeping and divers.[243] Bad weather had delayed the physical search for any wreckage, which could also have been carried away on a strong ebb tide.[244] The absence of any wreckage led to much speculation about the existence of an enemy submarine in South African waters.[245] Although no official connection was made, an intercepting operation was taking place at this time as a result of U-Boat spotting off Walvis Bay four days earlier.[246]

Like members of the AS-WAAS and WAAF Coastal Artillery Specialists, all members of the WANS Technical Branch had to sign the Combat Oath as they would undertake "duties other than those of a non-combatant nature".[247] For the CM Watchkeeper Swans this was particularly important as their duties were not only to keep watch over Saldanha Bay but were also directly involved in its defence. This marks a significant departure from the WAAS and WAAF. For Waasies and Waafs deployed in the AS-WAAS or in WAAF Anti-Aircraft Batteries, men were always present to take the final "shot"; even though the women were fully trained to fire themselves.[248] The same was true for British women in the ATS serving in AA Batteries.[249] This was done to protect the servicewomen's status as non-combatants. For the CM Watchkeeper Swans deployed at Saldanha Bay, they were expected to literally fire the shot.

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[241] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 291
[242] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 223.
[243] Gordon-Cumming, p. 223.
[244] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 98. Any further evidence of the wreck would likely have been destroyed in the two subsequent explosions of mines in Saldanha Bay.
[245] W.M. Bisset, "New Light on South Africa's Naval Heritage", *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies* 7, no. 4 (1977), p. 40.
[246] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945)*, p. 90. Operation Throttle lasted from 08:00 31 May to 20:00 2 June.
[247] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 61.
[248] SANDFA, UWH, Box 261, South Africa – Women, Newspaper cutting: "Union's Girl Soldiers New Units in Training. Anti-Aircraft Defences", *The Star*, 23 April 1942.
[249] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", pp. 307-308.

CM Watchkeeper Swans had standing orders that if the loops registered any unauthorised movement they "were to fire the Mine Loops as it indicated that an enemy ship had passed into the harbour".[250] Had Holmes not been present on the night in question, Labuschagne, by the order of her duties, would have still been required to fire the loop. Therefore, this particular group of Swans involved in CM Watchkeeping at NBNB were not auxiliary.[251] They were combatant; their attack on the enemy was expected to be lethal.

The fact that Labuschagne fired on "the enemy" was also met with approval. In a memo from the Director of Torpedoes and Mining, the women were congratulated for the "efficient manner in which they carried out their duties".[252] Labuschange herself was praised by the Chief of General Staff, Sir Pierre van Ryneveld. She was also given the Certificate for Good Service from the Chief of the General Staff (Union of South Africa). This was an award given twice yearly instituted in September 1944 that "signified appreciation […] of those whose high standards of service, whilst not qualifying for a State award, nevertheless warrants recognition".[253] She was the first of only six Swans to be awarded this honour.[254] Unfortunately, despite all of these achievements, despite being given the standing order to shoot and despite the streams of appreciation from the command, clearly the Swans as a regiment, continued to be classified as auxiliary and the best that Labushagne could secure, was a Certificate of Good Service. For the Swans, they have a good tale to tell and perhaps one day, members of the WADC will also receive the recognition they rightfully deserve.

## 5.6 Chapter Conclusion

The WANS was a small branch of the WADC, limited by concerns of economy and barriers of social gender norms. Despite its limited size, the Swans were clearly ingrained with their own distinct, naval subculture; sharing a "set of norms that regulate[d] the lives of those

[250] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 290.
[251] Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 301.
[252] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 291.
[253] Laver, p. 168.
[254] Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War (1939-1945,*. pp. 321-327. The other five to receive this award were: CPO (Mrs) Stella Hattingh, P/O (Miss) Vera Alford, P/O (Mrs) Lillian Sleeman, P/O (Mrs) Lyndall Plymen, and CPO (Miss) Meg Godley. Unfortunately neither Gordon-Cumming nor Laver record why these five Swans were given this award. Limited acces to the archives under COVID 19 conditions has also thwarted attempts to pursue this avenue.

in uniform".[255] The "homogeneity of approach" [256] that marks the existence of a military sub-culture is shown by the "sort of running guerrilla war" between the Swans and Waasies over the making of beds.[257] It was through their training, particularly the Disciplinary Course but more so the Technical training for the WANS, that the "shared assumptions and values" that mark the distinct culture of an organisation were instilled.[258]

The importance of recreating civilian women as service women was not only important in terms of teaching them correct, homogeneous patterns of behaviour and military discipline.[259] For the SANF, it was also important to recreate these women as members of the *navy*. This is most apparent in the lack of clerical training given to members of the WANS Clericals and Communications Branch. Unlike the WAAS and WAAF, no clerical training courses were offered to the Swans; those who had no prior experience had to learn on the job. It was more important that the women understood the importance of their work to the SANF than it was to have fast typists. This is also reflected in the preference for those with previous naval contacts during selection.[260]

The main focus for post-basic training was for the Swans technicals. Here, the trainees were rigorously instructed on the ins and outs of highly technical work mostly related to helping in the defence of the South Africa's coastline. The courses for HDO (Third and Second Class), CMO and HSD Swans were of a high standard and had a heavy focus on mathematics and physics as key components. Despite the fact that for most Swans these were "completely foreign subject[s]"[261] due to the gendered bias of contemporary education,[262] the majority succeeded in their training. As in Britain, the Swans demonstrated that they "were perfectly capable of undertaking most shore duties in place of men" given the necessary training.[263]

The fact that naval top brass seems to have *wanted* to use women, explains the focus on training and using Swans as technicals.[264] As the youngest branch of the UDF, they were not subjected to the same entrenched and overtly gendered stereotypes initially experienced by

[255] Dale R. Herspring, "Creating Shared Responsibility through Respect for Military Culture: The Russian and American Cases," *Public Administration Review* 71, no. 4 (2011), p. 521.
[256] Ledwidge, "Cracking On : British Military Culture and Doctrine", p. 137.
[257] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 302.
[258] Gordon, "Industry Determinants of Organizational Culture", p. 397.
[259] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 70.
[260] As discussed in Chapter 2.
[261] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 237.
[262] Walker: *Women & Resistance in South Africa*, p. 18.
[263] Stuart Mason, *The Wrens 1917-77: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service*, p. 62.
[264] SADFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 90 SANF WAAS, Proposed Formation of a Women's Auxiliary Naval Force, 2/8/1942.

their sisters in the WAAS and WAAF. In both the WAAS and WAAF, the majority of jobs taken over were clerical. The WANS, however, saw 51% of its members involved in technical work. While this majority may be slim it is not insignificant. In addition to the different balance of work, the WANS were also distinct from their sister branches of the WADC in the *type* of technical work undertaken.

Using Campbell's contention that "auxiliary" work within the military can be seen as a stage of women's integration into nations' armed forces,[265] it was shown in Chapters 3 and 4 that in these two branches, servicewomen's work can be considered in four levels of auxiliary. These are (from most to least auxiliary): 1) Clericals deployed at home; 2) Clericals deployed abroad, near the war itself; 3) Technicals in previously male jobs keeping the machinery of war running; and 4) The "fighting few"[266] involved in a defence capacity. For members of the WAAS and WAAF, it was the AS-WAAS and WAAF Coastal Artillery Specialists who came closest to overcoming Peniston-Bird's conception of the "combat taboo".[267]

For the Swans, this pattern appears to have unfolded differently. A little less than half of the Swans were deployed in the Clerical and Communications Branch. The clerical work that they did was not wholly different to that done by many young civilian women in offices. The most important difference was that this was *auxiliary* work for the SANF. As they did not serve abroad, the clerical Swans did not move beyond the "female-associative space" of the home front to the "male-associative space" of the war front,[268] as clericals in the WAAS and WAAF did. Because of the traditionally feminine nature of their work and the space in which it took place, the members of the WANS Clerical and Communications Branch remained firmly within the realm of auxiliary. However, in this instance, the warfront was brought to the women. They were given the orders to shoot if necessary and, one did. It is here that one can broaden the notion of combat zone.

Unlike the WRNS – who only began to do "the sort of work [not] generally associated with women" in 1941,[269] three years into its World War II service – the Swans were deployed in a technical capacity from the start. It is here where the "less auxiliary" nature of the service

[265] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany , and the Soviet Union", p. 318.
[266] Elshtain, *Women and War*.
[267] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform," *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), p. 32.
[268] Deirdre Osborne, "'I Do Not Know about Politics or Governments … I Am a Housewife': The Female Secret Agent and the Male War Machine in Occupied France (1942–5)", *Women: A Cultural Review* 17, no. 1 (2006), p. 43.
[269] Stuart Mason, *The Wrens 1917-77: A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service*, p. 62.

can most clearly be seen. In the WAAS and the WAAF, the majority of technicals took over military work, previously the domain of men, related to maintaining the secondary needs of the war machine. In the WANS, only the four "highest technicals"[270] – the HSD Swans who took on the work of repairing asdics and training men on Attack Teacher – can be said to fall into this category.

The greatest majority of technical Swans were directly involved in a defence capacity; as HDOs and CM Watchkeepers. These Swans replaced seamen in submarine detection. Although they were deployed in non-combatant, shore-based work they were members of the "fighting few", like AS-WAAS and WAAF Coastal Artillery Specialists. While these jobs did not completely transgress the combat taboo as they were also involved in "duties other than non-combatant duties"[271] and were not directly involved in combatant duties. However, within the "protected" category of women's wartime work as military auxiliaries, this type of defence work can be said to be the "least" auxiliary as it moved the women away from only being "the guardians of the family" towards the male role as "the protectors of the state".[272] This was taken further by CM Watchkeeper Swans who had standing orders to detonate mines on any suspected enemy submarine activity.[273] Unlike the AS-WAAS and WAAF Coastal Artillery Specialists, the Swans were allowed to make the call. As is demonstrated in the case of L/Swan (Miss) Sue Labuschagne, the women were not only allowed to pull the trigger but doing so was part of their duties should enemy vessels be registered. Thus, the CM Swans stationed at Saldanha Bay also took on a combatant position that culminated on 1 June 1944.

Therefore, it can be said that the WANS was the least auxiliary branch of the WADC. By virtue of their gender and the proscriptions placed on their roles in the UDF because of this, the Swans would technically remain "supplementary to men",[274] although they did not see themselves as such in terms of their personal identity as servicewomen. Due the limited size of the WANS Establishment, Dalgliesh and the SANF had to make the most effective use of available manpower. In this case that meant using their women auxiliaries more fully; moving

[270] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 71.
[271] Laver, pp. 61-62 & SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties, 3/9/1942.
[272] Elshtain, "Women & War", p. 307.
[273] Laver, *Sailor-Women, Seawomen, SWANS*, p. 290.
[274] SANDFA, WADC, Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941, p. 3.

the Swans beyond the auxiliary stage and allowing one group of Swans – CM Watchkeepers at NBNB – to become combatant.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

During World War II, more than 21 000 white women were brought into the uniformed fold of the UDF to help alleviate the shortage of manpower experienced by South Africa's military. Due to the unprepared state of the UDF at the outbreak of war in 1939, the male arms of service had to be recreated "virtually from scratch".[1] The poor state of the UDF at the outbreak of the War, created a manpower gap that could be closed by using women in auxiliary, non-combatant positions. By comparison, in Britain the women's auxiliary services were re-established – after several abortive attempts to revive them in the inter-war years[2] – largely based on the templates of their World War I predecessors. Because of their late origins, the WAAS, WAAF and WANS took on the characteristics of contemporary South African society and the military culture of the male branches to which they were attached. This thesis has argued that the intersection of these two spaces impacted ways that "auxiliary" was framed and performed over the course of the war.

In other Allied nations, like Britain, the US and Russia, women were also drawn into military service for the same reason: to replace men. In times of military crisis women can be seen as "an untapped source of high quality human resources".[3] They are, quite simply, used out of military necessity for manpower.[4] During World War II, women were initially integrated into the military in terms of auxiliary and secretarial work; functions that are secondary to the main focus of fighting, despite their crucial nature to the continued running of the war institution. Within the military, as a microcosm of the society in which it is embedded, gender norms had to be preserved.[5] Because of the dichotomies of male/female, protector/protected, home/front, life-giver/life-taker, women's place in most armed forces during World War II was defined as auxiliary and non-combatant. In other words, women's participation in the military was shaped by gender norms: their placement as auxiliaries did not "threaten the sexual status

[1] Bill Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012), p. 41.
[2] See: Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, pp. 7-24.
[3] Lindy Heinecken, "Securing South Africa's Future: Putting Women in the Frontline," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 22, no. 2 (2000), n.p.
[4] Regina F. Titunik, "The Myth of the Macho Military," *Polity* 40, no. 2 (2008), p. 140.
[5] M. Michaela Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", *Women's Studies International Forum* 27, no. 1 (2004), p. 15 & D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (1993), p. 302.

quo".[6] Even Russian women's exceptional status as combatants was limited through their being seen as substitutes for soldiers, not as soldiers in their own right.[7] The use of women in the military could not be allowed to disrupt the stratified, masculine construction of this organisation.[8]

In South Africa, the integration of white women into the military structure to free white men to fight was similarly limited by gendered barriers. The place of the WADC in the structure of the UDF was strictly defined by the military elites as "supplementary to men".[9] Women could not be recognised as full members of the UDF because of the negative impact that this would have on both the character of the military as a masculine institution and the fears of upsetting prevailing social structures and gender norms. The definitions of who could and could not become part of the South African military structure was further complicated by race rhetoric which entrenched racial hierarchies in a context of competing nationalisms at a political and social level.

Due to the racial divides present in South African society, military service was not only conceptualised as masculine but also as white. Through the NEAS, African, Indian and coloured men served in auxiliary, non-combatant positions within the structures of the UDF. Their service and place within the UDF was framed in a similar way to that of white women auxiliaries. Both groups' inclusion was predicated on their availability as untapped sources of manpower and was further necessitated by the crisis of a world war. Due to the need to maintain not only gendered but also racial social divisions in the military context, neither black men nor white women could officially be allowed to be more than non-combatant and auxiliary without disrupting social mores.

Due to the combination of their race and gender, black and coloured women were excluded from the military even as non-combatant auxiliaries. The suggestion that coloured women be employed as auxiliaries to the WADC auxiliaries does, however, illustrate the depths of the UDF's manpower crisis. In order to release white men to fight, white women had to be released from "lower classifications of the work" by those who fell below them in

[6] "Introduction" in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 8.
[7] Olesya Khromeychuk, "Experiences of Women at War", *Baltic Worlds* X, no. 4 (2017), p. 61.
[8] Hampf, "'Dykes' or 'Whores': Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II", p. 15.
[9] SANDFA, Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps (WADC), Box 5, DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, Regulations; WAAS and WAAF, 12/5/1941.

contemporary South Africa's racial hierarchy: coloured women.[10] Black men could not be allowed to do this due to the ever-present fear of the *swartgevaar* nor could African women because their status in South African society at the time was deemed to be even lower than that of either black men or coloured women.

The complex intersection within South African society at the time of World War II are, therefore, clearly reflected in the microcosm of the UDF. Racial hierarchies and gender boundaries had to be maintained. However, the prevailing need for manpower gave some space in which these barriers could be *bent*. White women and black men could be allowed into the military sphere – from which their race and gender normally excluded them – provided that their service was limited to being auxiliary and non-combatant by the (white, male) military elite. Therefore, in South Africa the combat taboo was not only gendered but racial.

The definition of the Springdoes' place as auxiliaries did not only take place on the elite level of restrictions put forward by general staff at headquarters. The construction of the military as a masculine environment and the threat that the inclusion of women posed to this construction was reflected in the views of South African servicemen. Particularly in the early years of the existence of WADC, this is reflected in the ways the Springdoes are depicted in the pages of the *Nongqai*, a servicemen's magazine. In a number of cartoons published in this magazine in 1941, shortly after the birth of the WAAS and the WAAF, images of South African servicewomen appear based on the stereotyped imaginings of military women. The Springdoes, in these cases particularly the WAAS, are held to be sexually over-active *losmeisies* (figure 3.3), more concerned with preserving feminine comforts than military bearing (figures 2.1 and 3.4), or tainted by their military service as masculine and inverting social gender roles (figure 3.5).

Servicemen's view of servicewomen did, however, shift over the course of the war. As more women joined the WAAS, WAAF and WANS and the variety of work they undertook grew, more servicemen came into contact with the Springdoes and stereotypes gave way to a view based in personal experience. This is most obvious in the WAAF and the WANS. In these two branches, the Waafs and the Swans worked in close association with their male colleagues, particularly in technical work. The men praised the women for their fast adaptation to these new, previously masculine fields of work in newspaper reports and even in the *Nongqai*. This does not, however, mean that gendered stereotypes of women's ability disappeared completely.

[10] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 93 Employment of Coloured women, Employment of Coloured Women, 21/12/1942.

Nor that one should evaluate these contributions in terms of the approval of service men. The praise that servicemen gave was, more often than not, coupled with surprise. Although these were women doing men's work, men's perceptions of their abilities still fell victim to what Nancy Clark describes as "sex-typing".[11] Nevertheless, the shift in men's perception of servicewomen points to there existing a distinction between the conceptualisation of military women as put forward by the elites at Headquarters and that which was experienced by the men who worked with them on the ground. This remarkable feat undermined the patriarchal notions of what women *could* do which had been passed down from generation to generation of men. However, these white men were not unfamiliar with stories of heroines in combat and on the frontlines during the South African War (1899-1902). These were often recalled into the public consciousness of white South Africans, especially in this turbulent political period of unfolding competing nationalisms. Neither were the men in military command impervious to the successes of these women. On more than one occasion, they acknowledged the formidable contributions of women in the war.

The Springdoes' self-perception of their military status was also in contrast to their official designation. It is clear that Sjoberg's "limiting gendered tropes" were present in the views of military men, but they did not have as much impact in the Springdoes' *self*-perception.[12] Their military identity was shaped on three levels of adoption: military discipline and training; markers of military belonging; and divisional military culture.

Through training new recruits were transformed from civilians to soldiers. Their identities were recreated in the mould of the arm of service to which they belonged. This is most evident during the basic training that the members of the WAAS, WAAF and WANS received. During these first weeks, the women were taught all the aspects of military life needed to render them "fit, efficient, resilient, whatever their intended role".[13] In order to perform well within the military environment, the women first had to understand how to behave in this environment in terms of military hierarchies and ways of doing. Within this, the recruits were also integrated into the specific aspects of life and behaviour rooted in the individual arms of that service. This meant that basic training (re)created the Waasies as part of the South African army, the Waafs as part of the SAAF, and the Swans as part of the SANF.

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[11] Nancy L. Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa", *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001), p. 1186.
[12] Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict* (Combridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014), p. 27.
[13] Corinna Peniston-Bird, "Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform", *Body & Society* 9, no. 4 (2003), p. 43.

Training and discipline was also used by the military elites to ensure that social norms of women's behaviour were maintained. This took place through the WAMPC, WIO and AES. These three spaces recreated the identities of the Springdoes in terms of military discipline, social discipline and national discipline, respectively. It is, however, ironic that women were taught to be good post-war citizens through the AES while the military definition of citizenship, as put forward by the 1912 Act that created the UDF, excluded these servicewomen.

The Springdoes' identities as servicewomen were also transformed through the adoption of uniform and badges of rank. These markers of military belonging visually displayed their membership to the military. They saw themselves becoming integrated into the military culture through their uniforms, as is reflected in the cartoon by an anonymous member of the AS-WAAS. It shows that the women recognised that their (individual) civilian identities were being replaced with a (uniform military identity). These indications of their membership to the UDF were taken seriously by the servicewomen. Their fight in May 1941 to keep wearing the same badges of rank as their male equivalents makes this clear. The Springdoes saw these badges as an indication of their acceptance into the male space of the UDF, but the military elites at Headquarters saw it as a mistake to have acknowledged the presence of women as more than temporary.

Being given military uniform and rank was not unique to the WADC. In other comparable women's auxiliary services this was also done to maintain military hierarchies and discipline. However, South African servicewomen stand out from the international auxiliary fold because they used the same ranks and rank structure as their male equivalents in the UDF; unlike British women auxiliaries who were given rank equivalents. South African women's ranks were limited to prevent servicewomen from holding authority over servicemen and some feminisations of titles took place, but they were still the same as servicemen's. This again demonstrates how the women of the WADC were brought in line with male military identity because they adopted the hierarchies of the military space. This is also reflected in the close cleaving of the organisational structures of the branches of the WADC and their male counterparts.

Uniforms and training did not only (re)create the women's identities on the broad, umbrella level of the WADC and UDF, but also (re)created their identities as part of the distinct divisional sub-cultures of the South African army, SAAF and SANF. This is most apparent in the WAAF and WANS for two different reasons. The Swans and the seamen of the SANF were visually set apart by being the only part of the UDF to be dressed in navy blue rather than

serviceable Springbok khaki. This visual distinctness of the naval uniforms meant that this branch was set apart: their dress marked then as a different group.[14] While the Waasies and Waafs disparagingly called them "glamour girls", the Swans themselves saw their naval dress as "smarter" than army and air force khaki. The allegiance and identity of the Swans clearly lay with the SANF rather than the WADC.

For the SAAF and the WAAF, the close association was not based on markers of belonging. From the inception of the SAWAA, the WAAF and the Air Force shared a close association. The integration of women into the sub-culture of the Air Force was made official when the WAAF and SAAF were amalgamated in June 1942.

These divisional differences led the members of the WAAS, WAAF and WANS to see their own branch as different from the others. Due to the striking visual difference between the Swans and the other Springdoes, this is most apparent here. Not only were the women set apart by their uniforms but by their behaviour. They had adopted naval standards of behaviour and discipline; making their beds, for example, in the way the navy did. This meant that when the different services of the WADC come together there was friction because each saw their divisional culture as the "correct" form to assume. Therefore, the women defined themselves according to their parallel male divisional space.

Ian van der Waag has put forward two levels of military culture: the elitist military culture one, and the embracing military culture two.[15] It is clear that both these levels shaped the identity of the WAAS, WAAF and WANS as military services. The careful framing of the Springdoes' position within the UDF structure as auxiliary and non-combatant was passed down from the military elites. It is, therefore, rooted in military culture one. The women's self-perception (and the ways in which they were perceived by their male counterparts) were rooted in military culture two: the patterns of behaviour and symbols that distinguish one group of people from another. This, however, did not unravel uniformly across the WADC as a whole, but, as shown, differed according to the division. Perhaps the term regimental military culture is more apt in this case study.

[14] Nathan Joseph and Nicholas Alex, "The Uniform : A Sociological Perspective", *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (1972), p. 720.
[15] Ian van der Waag, "Military Culture and the South African armed forces, an historical perspective", paper presented at the Second South African Conference on Strategic Theory, "On Strategy; Military culture and African armed forces", co-hosted by Stellenbosch University and the Royal Danish Defence College, 22-23 September 2011, p. 3.

Because of race and gender hierarchies and how these shaped the South African combat taboo, white women's military participation in the WADC was framed as auxiliary and non-combatant by the military elite and by social mores. Women's social status as the protected had to be ideologically maintained. The contemporary definition of combat is described by Campbell as an "organized lethal attack on an organized enemy".[16] The word "lethal" here is key. Women, as the protected and as life-givers, are assumed to be unable to kill,[17] and female violence is seen as abhorrent.[18] As such, their military participation was predicated on only helping the war to take place but not taking part in actually fighting it: they were framed as auxiliaries rather than combatants.

There are, however, levels of auxiliary within the WADC. The SAWAS and the SAWAA (or WVAF as it later became) did not fall away when the WAAS and WAAF became military bodies. They remained active but remained civilian. The SAWAS continued to knit socks and organise dances for servicemen but they also aided recruiting efforts for the WAAS. So too did the WVAF. The WVAF, unlike the SAWAS, was administrated by, and attached to, the WAAF as a combination reserve force and auxiliary service. These women can, therefore, be said to be the "most" auxiliary part of the WADC because they were removed from the military and its war fighting activities in terms of both activities and space. They were auxiliaries to auxiliaries.

The bending of what auxiliary meant for South African servicewomen is further reflected in the development of the branches of the WADC. This growth beyond the auxiliary stage of women's military integration, as put forward by Campbell,[19] was ironically aided by the disorganised nature of the UDF at the beginning of the war. This allowed each branch of the UDF to be formed individually in conjunction with the male arms of service to which they were attached and to frame their own interpretations of what "duties other than non-combatant duties" entailed.

The WAAS and the WAAF followed a similar pattern in terms of their growth and how auxiliary acts changed in these spaces. Both grew from civilian women's organisations that were established shortly before the outbreak of the War with an eye to offering aid in the

[16] Campbell, "Women in Combat : The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 301.
[17] Bourke: *An Intimate History of Killing*, (London and New York: Granta Press, 1999), p. 321.
[18] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Women and War," in *Oxford Illustrated History of Modern War*, ed. Charles Townshend (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 307.
[19] Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union", p. 318.

coming war effort. After the outbreak of war both civilian originators were militarised in 1940 due to a combination of agitation from their members to be allowed to do more, and the Army and Air Force's need for manpower. Three phases can be identified in the development of these two branches and how the levels of auxiliary evolved.

The first takes place between 1938 and 1940. With the looming threat of war, the SAWAS and SAWAA were set up as civilian bodies. The SAWAS to take care of the morale and bodies of servicemen and the SAWAA with the goal of freeing men to fly. With the outbreak of war in 1939, the members of these organisations began to agitate to be allowed to do more for the war effort and to do so in an official capacity. Due to the UDF's ever-present need for manpower, especially after the instigation of the "Red Tab" Oath in February 1940, women were needed to take over non-combatant jobs so that more men could go "Up North". In May 1940, the WAAS and WAAF were officially gazetted as non-combatant, auxiliary women's services and their first members joined in June.

Secondly, between 1940 and 1942, the number of Waasies and Waafs would grow, as would the variety and scope of their work. The main purview of both services was to take over clerical work from servicemen but as the war progressed, and more men were needed for service, women were brought into technical work. Much of this technical work was work that had not been done by women before; showing that the need for manpower created space for the gendered "sex-typing" of work to shift.[20] In the WAAF, this shift in auxiliary work – from "safely" feminine clerical work to masculine technical work – was taken further through the amalgamation of the WAAF and the SAAF and the large-scale replacement policy that came with it. The development of women's auxiliary work came to a head with the dawn of the UDF-wide recruitment crisis in 1942. As it became more difficult to secure fighting men, women were brought into more areas of auxiliary military work that were removed from feminine occupations and were seen as men's work.

Finally, parallel to outbreak of the recruitment crisis, Japan entered World War II in December 1941. This was seen as major threat to South Africa's home defence. The entire combat zone, for both men and women, was being potentially relocated. The combination of this threat and the need to release more men to fight meant that womanpower had to be used in new ways. From August 1942, certain sections of the WAAS and WAAF could consent to be

[20] Clark, "Gendering Production in Wartime South Africa", p. 1186.

employed in "duties other than non-combatant duties".[21] The AS-WAAS and Waafs who served in AA Batteries took the "Combat Oath" and served in front-line, home defence combat units. However, these women were not directly called "combatants". The obtuse phrase "duties other than non-combatant duties" disguised their status; labelling their work as conforming to the combat taboo. In addition to this, the societal need to maintain the gendered dichotomy of protector/protected meant that these women could not be fully transformed into combatants. While these divisions of the WAAS and WAAF did everything alongside men they were stationed with, only the women were barred from taking the final step: pulling the trigger. This meant that the combat taboo was broken down but not completely negated. In short, they could be allowed to take part in an organised attack on an organised enemy but, because of their gender and its association with life-giving rather than life-taking they could not be allowed to kill.

The WAAF moved beyond the auxiliary on a second level: the flying few. The Air Force associates flight with active service and grounded work with auxiliary, as pointed out by Stone.[22] The majority of the Waafs were relegated to the realm of auxiliary but there were a few Waafs who served as pilots during World War II. Therefore, these women were not auxiliary. This is in contrast to the WAAF in Britain where no women served as pilots.

As the last branch of the WADC to be created in 1943, the development of the WANS from purely auxiliary to combatant unfolded differently. The WAAS and WAAF had already demonstrated the effectiveness of womanpower for the UDF. The WANS had no civilian mother, rather it was born directly from the insistence of the DSANF that women auxiliaries would be a boon to the Navy's effectiveness. In 1942, Commander Dalgliesh, DSANF, proposed the creation of a women's naval auxiliary service. While his initial vision was rejected, it is clear that Dalgliesh was instrumental in furthering the cause of the WANS through his recognition of the efficacy of women's auxiliaries and his continued campaigning for women to fill not only clerical but also defence posts in the SANF. The difficulties and debates surrounding the creation of the WANS show that while Naval elites recognised the importance of women, the UDF elites did not wholly share this view.

[21] SANDFA, WADC, Box 15, DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, 'Employment of Members of the WADC in duties other than non-combatant duties', 3/9/1942.
[22] Tessa Stone, "Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War", *Women's History Review* 8, no. 4 (1999), pp. 605–624.

From the hatching of the Swans in 1943, the focus of their work as technicals led to 51% of Swans to be employed in this capacity. Unlike the WAAS and WAAF, the WANS did not start as clericals and gradually become less auxiliary as the War progressed. This was a small women's auxiliary service linked to a small men's branch – all the manpower they could get had to be used efficiently. This meant that the Swans were not only focused on technical work; but that this technical work was aimed at home defence. It is worth noting that the entire SANF was swiftly reinvented because in effect, they were the arm most likely to witness "combat" on home "soil". The terms combatant and auxiliary, at least for the navy, were not theoretical extrapolations debated by men waiting to be sent to the front. The threat of war arriving on the shores of South Africa was a reality.

While the WAAS and WAAF developed their defensive divisions over time and due to the needs of their male equivalents, the WANS had started with this in mind. Swans served as watchkeepers, helping to protect the South African coastline. For one division of watchkeepers, this went further. The unclear "duties other than non-combatant duties" clause applied to the WADC, was interpreted differently in the case of CM Watchkeeing Swans. These women not only kept watch over Saldanha Bay – fully replacing men in this work – but also guarded it from enemy submarine attack. Their standing orders were to fire the controlled mine loops should an unknown vessel by registered on their equipment. Unlike the WAAS and WAAF in AA Batteries, CM Watchkeeping Swans were allowed to, or indeed expected to, pull the trigger. One Swan did. On 1 June 1944, L/Swan Sue Labuschagne detonated two controlled mine loops on a suspected enemy submarine, thus (briefly) becoming an active combatant.

This constituted a radical departure from social constructs surrounding women's placement as non-combatants. The more combatant sections of the WAAS and WAAF always had men present to pull the trigger. Here Labuschagne did so herself. She not only took part in an organised attack on the enemy but directly contributed to this attack being lethal by pulling the trigger. This section of the WANS was, therefore, not auxiliary but combatant. And, they were congratulated for their efforts by the military command.

The auxiliary status of the Springdoes became less fixed as the war progressed and moved from auxiliary to (in certain cases) combatant. Six phases can, therefore, be identified in the WADC. The most auxiliary are those involved in activities and spaces furthest from the military arena and combat zones. The least are those who took part in combatant activities in combatant spaces. These include: 1) The auxiliaries to the auxiliaries (SAWAS and the WVAF); 2) Clericals deployed at home (doing feminine work at home); 3) Clericals deployed

"Up North" (doing feminine work at the front); 4) Technicals (taking over masculine work at home); 5) Combatant non-combatants (those involved in home defence roles but who were barred from pulling the trigger; and 6) The Firing Few (the CM Watchkeeper Swans who were under orders to attack the enemy and overcame the combat taboo).

These six phases in the auxiliary-combatant progression the WADC are not concrete. Some are present in the development of certain branches. For example, all three branches of the WADC were employed as clericals at home (phase 2). Other phases are bypassed entirely or are unique to a single service: the WANS did not grow from a civilian "mother" (phase 1) and they were the only to become combatant (phase 6). What this means, is that it is possible to describe servicewomen's movement towards combat as occurring on a *spectrum*.

This auxiliary-combatant spectrum also serves to highlight the porous limits of the definition of the terms "auxiliary" and "combatant". As World War II progressed and military needs changed, what constituted auxiliary service and what constituted combatant service were liable to change. These shifts were influenced by the changing nature of how the war was fought and the resulting manpower preassures. This cannot only be observed in the specific context of the WADC in South Africa – where, for example, the fears of Japanese submarine attacks propelled servicewomen into home defence – but also it can also be observed on a larger scale.

Women's involvement in World War II as a whole can also be said to fall on a similar auxiliary-combatant spectrum. In Britain, for example, the majority of service women were deployed as clericals but some progressed to technicals until a manpower shortfall led to the "breathtaking and revolutionary" decision was made to deploy servicewomen in AA Batteries.[23] This moved the membership of one section of the ATS closer to combat. These "combatant non-combatants" were those who, in this context, came closest to breaking the combat taboo. Russian women, on the other hand, were deployed as front-line soldiers; they were not only a "fighting few" but were deployed in fully combatant units and their military status was not linked to the auxiliary.[24] Although, even here their military contributions were seen as "substitutes" and, therefore, they were still secondary to male soldiers.[25] South Africa – due to the CM Watchkeeper Swans' orders to attack the enemy – falls in the middle of the spectrum: between the "more auxiliary" British servicewomen and the "not auxiliary" Russian

[23] Crang, *Sisters in Arms Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War*, p. 71.
[24] Zalietok, "British and Soviet Women in the Military Campaign of 1939-45: A Comparative Review," p. 16.
[25] Khromeychuk, "Experiences of Women at War," p. 61.

servicewomen. Therefore, the auxiliary spectrum can not only be applied to trace the progression of women's wartime work within individual women's services, but also across the women's wartime services of different nations.

With the surrender of Germany in May 1945 and the official end of World War II in September 1945, the need to free men for the fight ended. Technical work in the WAAS, WAAF and WANS slowly came to an end and the bulk of servicewomen were demobilised. Only a handful of WADC clericals remained by 1947; these had stayed on to help with demobilisation of South African servicemen and -women. In this year the WADC was briefly recreated as the Women's Defence Corps. However, much like the American WAC, the dropping of auxiliary was symbolic. In this case it was symbolic of a move from the ACF to the PF; their duties were confined to the "most auxiliary" as clerical staff. As pointed out by Chetty, at the end of the war it was necessary to "restore the status quo and the normality after the temporary aberration of war".[26] The cisis had ended and women, once again, had to be civilians. Unlike their sister-services abroad, the WADC did not have a distinct ending. Instead, in 1950, recruitment was stopped and the WADC was simply allowed to fizzle out.

By looking at the wartime contributions of white women through the WADC, this dissertation attempted to contribute to the historiography on white South African women's participation in the Union's war effort. This was motivated in part by recent commemorative practices which have celebrated black participation in the World Wars, specifically the sinking of the SS Mendi in 1917. But there are two areas in which self-reflection is necessary. Firstly the silences which could enhance the observations made in this dissertation. The second, is both a criticism of the study as well as a theoretical point for consideration.

Other uniformed, military women's bodies – like the SAMNS and the WAMPC – would provide for interesting comparison. So too would civilian auxiliary and charitable services – like SAWAS and the Gifts and Comforts Fund. Naturally, the most compelling addition would be a detailed analysis of the voices of black, coloured and Indian women into this discussion, should a viable source base be located. While this dissertation has challenged the term auxiliary in the arms of the WADC, the very terminology and war theories which have relegated the participation of women (and people of colour) in war to the auxiliary, have been incorporated and have played a large role in the analysis.

[26] Suryakanthie Chetty, "Imagining National Unity : South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War", *Kronos*, no. 38 (2012), p. 128.

As with the refining of women's history into gender history from the 1960s to accommodate for the intersectionality of women's lived experiences, writing women into war continues to use the very terminology of combatant and auxiliary, created by mostly patriarchal and paternalistic white military men, as a frame of reference in the study of women and war. It is therefore not necessarily the actions of these women which have been confined by the combat taboo, but rather the continued analysis of their contributions framed in terms of these problematic definitions emanating from the military, in a desperate attempt to seek the acknowledgement from that military structure. In South Africa, this was overcome in the literature on Boer women's participation in the South African War. They not only overcame the combat taboo because they fought on the side of a non-conventional, informal and less regimented military structure, but they also overcame the combat taboo of the historiography. They have taken up their rightful position as combatants and heroines in Afrikaner historiography. Arguably, this served a nationalist goal from the 1940s but, nevertheless, the Rubicon has been crossed.

This study has attempted to investigate the terms auxiliary and combatant beyond the confines of the terms of reference of the UDF. In so doing, it is clear that some women were combatants, the large majority not. A re-appraisal of the role played by South African "soldiers" in World War II, using the same points of reference, would probably reflect the same trend. In so doing, it would be possible to expand the auxiliary spectrum identified in the WADC to include white men – who could became active combatants – doing "auxiliary" work, and black men – who, like white women, were barred from becoming combatants – who became "combatant non-combatants".

The combat taboo serves as a useful point of departure when analysing the role of marginalised groups in war, but the combat taboo of war theories and historiographies desperately needs to be reimagined if the dual role of the female soldier – in the home and for her nation (as depicted in the Zam-buk advertisement in the opening paragraph of this study) – is to be fully acknowledged, celebrated and commemorated.

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DR(W)F 9-13, Duties of WAAS in Barracks, 21 February 1941 – 6 June 1941.

Box 4:

DR(W)F 11-2, Points Raised by SA League of Women Voters, 15 March 1941 – 1 October 1941.

Box 5:

DR(W)F 14-1, Supply of Clothing – WAAS, 29 July 1940 – 21 October 1942.

DR(W)F 14-3 Badges of Rank Officers of the WADC, 28 January 1941 – 22 October 1941.

DR(W)F 14-2, Wearing of Mufti, 6 January 1941 – 22 March 1943.

AG(W)F 15, WAMPC (Female Military Police), 17 January 1941 – 5 February 1943.

Box 12:

DR(W)F 36, Training of WAAS Coast Artillery Specialists, 3 June 1941 – 15 January 1943.

Box 14:

DR(W)F 75, Issue of Fire Arms WAAS, 3 March 1942 – 9 September 1943.

DR(W)F 79, Utilisation of WAAS Personnel in an emergency, 19 March 1942 – 20 May 1942.

DR(W)F 66, Formation of Women's ACF Unit – Militarisation of SAWAS and WVAF 15 August 1941 – 26 August 1942.

Box 15:

DR(W)F 89 Employment of Members of the WADC in Duties other than non-combatant duties, 3 September 1942 – 1 March 1943.

DR(W)F 90, SANF WAAS, 2 August 1942 – 7 September 1943.

DR(W)F 96, Employment of WAAS personnel on part time military service, 6 April 1943

DR(W)F 93, Employment of Coloured women, 21 December 1942 – 6 August 1943.

Box 33:

AS 10-1 Orders Standing WAAS, 20 March 1942 – 8 September 1943.

Box 34:

AS 13-1, Corr. RE Lectures, 4 November 1940 – 28 February 1941.

Box 51:

AS 22-12 WAAS employed at Cape Command "Seaward Defence", 3 September 1940 – 11 August 1942.

Box 87:

AS 71 Recruiting Procedure general Rules, Vol 1, 18 February 1940 – 5 March 1943.

Box 89:

AS 75 Organisation - WAAS (SA), 20 July 1944.

Box 99:

AS 104 Educational Services, 28 April 1941 – 11 June 1942.

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# Appendix A: Table of Ranks used in the UDF and WADC[1]

| | **UDF** | **WAAS** | **SAAF** | **WAAF** | **SANF** | **WANS** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Senior Officers** | Lieutenant-Colonel | Lieutenant-Colonel | Wing Commander | Wing Officer | Commander | - |
| | Major | Major | Squadron Leader | Squadron Officer | Lieutenant-Commander | - |
| **Junior Officers** | Captain | Captain | Flight Lieutenant | Flight Officer | Lieutenant | Second Officer |
| | Lieutenant | Lieutenant | Flying Officer | Section Officer | Sub-Lieutenant | Third officer** |
| | 2nd Lieutenant | 2nd Lieutenant | Pilot Officer | Assistant Section Officer | Ensign | - |
| **Non-Commissioned Officers** | (Flight Sargent)* | - | (Flight Sargent) | - | Chief Petty Officer | Chief Petty Officer Swan |
| | Sergeant | Sergeant | Sergeant | Sergeant | Petty Officer | Petty Officer Swan |
| | Corporal | Corporal | Corporal | Corporal | Leading Seaman | Leading Swan |
| **Rank and File** | Private | Private | Airman | Airwoman | Seaman | Swan |

* This rank was not used in the WAAS or WAAF.
** The WANS rank of Third Officer was not widely used.

[1] Table formulated by the author. The structure of the WADC and how it falls into the larger structure of the UDF is not made explicit in any documentation. This table of ranks and the organisational diagram (Appendix B) have been compiled by the author from a number of sources, which includes both archival and secondary sources, in order to fully comprehend the complexities of the military placement of the WADC as simultaneously parallel and secondary to the male UDF.

# Appendix B: Structure of the UDF